3: Mountford E-5 (1948) 1956 O117 Murngin O117

THE ART OF YIRRKALLA

The Saw-fish, Nalgan

Plate 127C belongs to the saw-fish, *nalgan*, totem of Milingimbi. Four saw-fish are depicted, two in the upper panel at *a*, *a*, and two in the lower at *b*, *b*. In the lower panel a fresh-water tortoise is shown between the tails of the saw-fish. Scattered throughout the drawing are small star-like designs which represent the star-fish, *midjala*. These fish provide food for the tortoises. The oval designs between the star-fish represent seaweed, *djiwul*, and the dots, its fruit. The two fish on the right side of the upper panel are called by the native name of *wungalbu*, and the three transverse cross-hatched panels, *c*, *c*, *c*, are sand-bars near the totemic place. There are three flying fish, *digar*, at the upper edge of the bark painting.

The Turtle, Wilira

The totemic place of the turtle, *wilira*, pictured in Pl. 127D, is an island called Nulgunin-numa, situated north-west of Elcho Island. The triangular patterns occupying most of the surface of the bark painting are clouds created by the three turtles spraying water into the sky. Two king-fish are shown in the clouds, one at *a* and one at *b*.

2. SMOKING PIPES AND MYTHS

As far as I am aware the long smoking pipe, Fig. 59A, B, is used in Australia only by the aborigines of Arnhem Land and the adjacent islands.

Tobacco smoking was introduced by the Malays within the last century or so when they visited Australia during their periodical journeys to collect trepang and pearl shell, though the *Baijini* myth suggests that the aborigines may have become acquainted with tobacco at an even earlier date. After the Commonwealth Government, about 1910, prohibited the Malays from coming to Australia the aborigines continued to use the Malay pipe, smoking either a substitute or European tobacco, occasionally issued by white traders and missionaries.

In general, the pipes[70] are made in a few minutes from the pithy stem of a shrub (*Guettarda speciosa*). The aboriginal removes the pith with a thin stick, plugs one end with bark, cuts a hole in the side an inch or more from the end, fits a bowl[71] saved from the old pipe, and, except for the engraving, the pipe is complete.

The pipes I collected are about an inch in diameter and varied in length from eight inches at Groote Eylandt to thirty inches at Yirrkalla, Fig. 59B. It was necessary to have a longer pipe stem at Yirrkalla so that there would be sufficient room for the totemic designs. In use, Pl. 124D, the aboriginal takes a

70. The bowls of the early pipes were made of tin-plate and carefully treasured. Since the last war, most pipe bowls are made from shortened cartridge cases. As mentioned earlier, the aborigines recognize the difference between the *Baijini* pipes, which are similar to those used by Europeans, and those of the Malays. The *Baijini* were a mysterious group of fair-skinned people who once camped at Port Bradshaw, myth, p. 333.

71. Warner (1937), p. 461, refers to the smoking pipes of the Murngin, near Milingimbi, and Elkin and the Berndts (1950), p. 102, to those at Yirrkalla.

[Text continues on p. 391]

3: Mountford E-5 (1948) 1956 Oil7 Murngin Oil7

more expert they experimented with the carved figures until at the present time they are able to produce a creditable representation of the human form (see Pl. 135.A, B).

From that time until comparatively recently the *jiritja*[18] men adopted the Macassan custom of using carved grave posts, but only when the body was buried instead of being placed on a platform. When a *jiritja* man died, his moiety asked a *dua* man to carve a mortuary post to place on the grave.[19] Later, when the body was disinterred and the burial dances were being performed a *jiritja* man, taking the mortuary post with him, went from camp to camp collecting food for the participants in the burial rituals.[20] At the completion of the meal the post was replaced on the empty grave.

The chief interest of the carved human figures lies in the fact that in a little over two generations the aborigines, without the help and for most of the time without even the knowledge of the white man, have taken a simple post figure of foreign origin and through improvement of techniques can now carve in wood heads and full-length human figures of considerable merit.

The Rev. F. W. Chaseling, when a missionary at Yirrkalla, was the first to discover that the aborigines of that locality were carving the human figure in the round. This discovery came about in a curious manner. When King George V died, Chaseling, in one of his sermons, expressed grief at the great loss the nation had suffered. This sermon and the concern of the missionary over the loss of his king so impressed *Mauwulan* that he carved a mortuary post,[21] similar to those used on the *jiritja* graves, but which was supposed to resemble the King. This post *Mauwulan* presented to the missionary so that he would be reminded of his dead monarch. Chaseling, in 1938, realizing the importance of his discovery, presented the mortuary post to the Australian Museum, Sydney. Unfortunately the Museum authorities, unaware that the post was a unique example of aboriginal handicraft, did not describe it in a scientific journal.

I was able to examine this figure early in 1949. It was the head of a bearded man (Pl. 138C, D) cut on the end of a hardwood post about four feet long and five inches in diameter. The face, about five inches long, consisted of eyes, a nose, lips and ears; the ears, however, being somewhat out of position.[22] The body of the pole is decorated with ceremonial string.

I also collected at Yirrkalla a number of human heads carved in wood, most of them representing spirit people or *Mokoi* who live in the surrounding jungles and eucalyptus forests.

18. This was because the aborigines made *Bopalindi* a member of the *jiritja* moiety.
19. According to Warner (1937), p. 434, at Milingimbi burial posts are placed on the graves.
20. Warner (1937), p. 433, describes this food-collecting ritual at Milingimbi, and the Berndts (1949), p. 216, at Yirrkalla.
21. Warner (1937), p. 501, refers to a burial post being erected on the aboriginal graves at Milingimbi. Elkin and the Berndts (1950), p. 48, record the finding of a burial post figure at the same locality.
22. I am indebted to the Australian Museum, Sydney, for the photograph of this specimen, E.46535, and the relevant details.

coffin. The short lines around the skeleton are the maggots deserting the body and burying themselves in the ground to pupate. The two men are now water-birds; the coffins, the paper-bark wrappings of the corpse and the body of *Buma-buma* are natural features at Wialpa.

The Night-bird, Karawak, and the Opossum, Marungo

During creation times the night-bird, *karawak*, flew from Milingimbi to a hollow tree at Cape Shield, Blue Mud Bay, so that he could talk to the opossum, *marungo*, who lived in it.[52]

At specified times, the aborigines associated with the night-bird and opossum totems carve a stick, similar to that illustrated on Fig. 65A, B, and send it to the clan and language groups on whose territory *karawak* rested on his way to Cape Shield. The presentation of this stick is an invitation to attend the ceremonies at a specified time and place.[53]

Figure 65A,-B represents the hollow tree at Cape Shield on the top of which, every night, the night-bird and the opossum talk to each other. The day-time camp of the opossum is represented at *e*, *e*, and the night camp at *f*, *f*.

On Fig. 65A, the opossum on the left is ascending the tree at nightfall to keep his companion company, and on the right he is descending to sleep through the hours of daylight. The designs at *a*, *b*, *c* and *d* symbolize water-lilies which grow in the swamps near the totemic tree, and the short lines at the bottom of Fig. 65B, the scratches made by the opossum in the bark of the totemic tree as he climbs up and down.[54]

(2) Oenpelli

Figure 67B is a message stick an aboriginal, *Miljirina*, at Oenpelli asked me to deliver to his friend, *Jakinuramilja*, in Darwin.

The line *a* is *Miljirina*, the sender of the stick, and the line *b* the recipient, *Jakinuramilja*; *c* is *Tundara*, one of *Miljirina's* wives, and *d*, another wife, called *Marinja*. The lines *e* and *f* each represent a bottle of tobacco. *Miljirina* wanted his friend, *Jakinuramilja*, to induce his two wives, *Tundara* and *Marinja*, to come back to him at Oenpelli; he also wanted two bottles of tobacco.[55]

Figure 68E is the message stick I carried from an aboriginal, *Kainarani*, at Oenpelli to his son, *Pultadi*, in Darwin. The sender was distressed because his son had been drinking heavily, and was urging him to return to his father and

52. For the complete myth, see p. 362.

53. Warner (1937), p. 362, mentions that at Milingimbi similar *garrawak* message sticks are carried to both *dua* and *jiritja* groups notifying them that the *narra* rituals are about to start.

54. The symbolism employed on the bark painting of the night-bird and the opossum, Pl. 115E, is similar to that used on the message stick.

55. Tobacco was traded in small bottles. When we were at Yirrkalla the mission authorities at southern Groote Eylandt discontinued the issue of tobacco. After that prohibition, there was a regular trade in bottles of tobacco between the expedition camp and the Groote Eylandt Mission. The tobacco followed the same lines as in the ceremonial trade cycle described by Thomson (1949).

which then has to be quickened. The coastal Arnhem Landers have had centuries of contact, and it may be that the usually accepted Aboriginal doctrine of conception has been modified here. In any case, granting the premises, the form in which they hold it is eminently logical. 114 842 796

Amongst the many other interesting points raised by the author is the vital significance of dreams, particularly for ritual and its interpretation. One of Mr. Berndt's important contributions to the anthropology of northern Arnhem Land is his systematic recording of dreams—a sign of the confidence put in him by the natives, and also a sign of the objectivity with which they regard dreams. 114 123 787

One last point: Mr. Berndt lays stress on the importance of the ritual rôle played by women in this region. He is correct in doing so. Though they are not on the "Mother Place", yet they are nearby playing their part, a part which stems from the Dreamtime, when the sacred ritual was theirs; and how else could it be, for life and birth is through the womb? A cult of the Great Mother would have no foundation apart from the women through whom her children must be born. Women here have their sacred aspect and sacred rôle. 114 562 796

The Author and the Field

Mr. R. M. Berndt was well equipped for doing research into the religion of Arnhem Land. After study in the Department of Anthropology, University of Sydney, he with his wife (Catherine H. Berndt), also an Anthropologist, did four years of field research amongst Aborigines in both tribal and detribalized conditions. This included about eighteen months on the south-west of Arnhem Land and on the border of the Kimberley Division of Western Australia, where he was introduced to the cult. In 1946 when the Australian National Research Council was able to make a further grant to these workers, we selected the north-eastern corner of Arnhem Land as the main field. Research there would be complementary to what Dr. Warner had done eighteen years before; in addition it was an area subject to the spread of native customs and rites from both the west and the south, and was also likely to show some cultural effects arising from long contact with Macassans or others who visited the region to engage in marine industry. Finally, although a Mission had been operating at Yirrkalla for nearly ten years and an Air Force base had been established there during the war, causing some modification of native life, in particular, lessening the degree of nomadism, yet in spite of this, the fundamental drives and beliefs had not been affected. Men in the prime of life as well as the old men still belonged to the "old order". It was, therefore, still possible to study the native religion in its cultural and social setting as a functioning institution. Fortunately, I was able to assure myself of this during a visit and inquiries in the region in 1946. 114 121 [122] [797] [177]

6: Berndt E-5 (1946-1947) 1951
OI17 Murngin OI17

123 Mr. and Mrs. Berndt on their part had proved their capacity to obtain the confidence of the Aborigines, to be admitted into the "inside" life of the men and women respectively, and to work in the native language. These three qualifications are essential for a study of a subject so intimate as a religious cult with its many personal and social ramifications.

With regard to the language it should be emphasized that more is required than ability to use it only as a phrasebook tool for asking questions, or to record slowly long texts. It is necessary to follow the ritual songs as they are chanted, and the discussions on doctrine and ritual. Fortunately, previous linguistic research in the region had [114] [797] been done by Dr. A. Capell of this Department, and the Methodist Missions at both Millingimbi and Yirrkalla had been using the local related dialects for some years. The general principles of the language and a reasonable vocabulary were known. Armed with this knowledge together with much field experience, and living for nearly twelve months quite close to the native camp, a remarkable degree of proficiency was obtained. In this type of work, the result of the efforts of two persons is more than desirable.

114 I have emphasized this point so that readers will know that the book is truly first hand work. Unfortunately, native opinions and interpretations could not be given in the Aboriginal language for the printing cost would be prohibitive, but some of them will be published elsewhere. I have, however, discussed with the author all the statements and interpretations attributed to native informants, and the translations of texts, and am satisfied that we are presented with a reliable record of intelligent native thought and belief. Mr. Berndt's own opinions are only expressed, and then sparingly, at the conclusion of chapters, and in the final chapter. Also, Mr. Berndt was able [123] to check with his wife the women's attitude to, and part in, the ritual, and their knowledge of doctrines. Only a woman worker can observe and inquire into this satisfactorily. Mrs. Berndt, therefore, provides a further assurance of the reliability of this record.

For these reasons, as well as for my own special interest in the subject matter and in the region and because of my close association with Mr. Berndt in his anthropological research, I commend this book. It is a most important contribution to our knowledge of Australian Aboriginal religion, a contribution which will be increased by a study of the Djanggawul cult, now in process, which, like the Wauwalik, preceded the Kunapipi in north-east Arnhem Land.

Department of Anthropology,
University of Sydney.
June 24, 1949.

A. P. ELKIN.

the guise of an Ancestral Being) is the proselytizer, the carrier of the germ of a religious idea, which is adopted by, and modified to suit, the social group in which he finds himself. Whether he brought with him the ingredients of that religion from his own "home", or whether it took shape in consequence of his contact with the alien people, is a matter for conjecture.

The diffusion of Aboriginal religious cults, such as the Kunapipi, also presents some interesting features. A certain amount of more or less "pure" evangelization has occurred in this respect; individual cult leaders, of both historic and contemporary society, have been interested in furthering the activities of the cult. But in their successful and unsuccessful attempts to introduce their particular beliefs into other groups, they take only the basis of their cult life, and do not as a rule attempt to superimpose their own cultural ideas and organization. In north-eastern Arnhem Land, for example, the Kunapipi, recognized by natives themselves as an introduced theme, has been fairly well integrated with existing social organization, religious life, and secular beliefs; even its mythology has been altered to meet the demands of local ethics, while the alien songs are interpreted in the light of indigenous criteria. Nevertheless, the basic ideology and construction of the Kunapipi cult remain: and it is this aspect which really concerns the proselytizer. The same process may be observed in other regions, such as western Arnhem Land, the Daly River–Port Keats area, and west-central Northern Territory.

* * * *

A word should be said concerning the presentation of Kunapipi Song Cycles (that is, in Chapters VII, VIII, X, and XI). Their value lies in their substantiation of the cult's doctrine, explaining its outward expression in ritual and in the use of ceremonial emblems and objects. Such traditional songs ensure that the original intent of the cult is not lost or radically misinterpreted. To-day, however, misinterpretation is possible as a result of conflicting loyalties arising from the contact of Aboriginal with European culture. In order to restrict ourselves to the literal interpretation of these songs, it has been found necessary to present them with an interlinear translation, a general rendering, and a brief commentary based on native interpretation: this method makes available the maximum amount of data. The phonetic script used conforms to that of the International Phonetic Association,[2] amended for use in Australia by Dr. A. Capell.[3]

2. C. Noel-Armfield, *General Phonetics*, 1931, pp. 21–23. *Vide* R. and C. Berndt, "A Preliminary Report of Field-Work in the Ooldea Region, Western South Australia", *Oceania Bound Reprint*, Sydney, 1945, pp. 262–264, or *Oceania*, Vol. XV, No. 1, pp. 50–52.
3. A. Capell, *Methods and Materials for Recording Australian Languages*, Sydney, 1945 (reprinted from *Oceania*, Vol. XVI, No. 2, pp. 144–176). Since the complete phonetic script was not available for rendering native words in this volume, some equivalents in ordinary English lettering have been used.

6: Berndt E-5 (1946-1947) 1951
OI17 Murngin OI17

CHAPTER I

THE CULTURAL PATTERN OF NORTH-EASTERN ARNHEM LAND SOCIETY

a. The Geographical Background:

The main centre with which we shall be dealing here is Yirrkalla, in the far north-eastern corner of the Arnhem Land Aboriginal Reserve. The surrounding area is thickly wooded, with jungles and mangrove swamps, fresh water streams and tidal rivers, long beaches broken by sheer cliffs, and occasional islands fairly close to the shore.

Yirrkalla itself takes its name from a fresh water creek that flows into the surf beside a long white curving beach. This creek drains a wide area of lagoon and swamp, its source far back in the hilly inland. Wide grass flats, easily inundated during the monsoonal rains, and dense jungles, lie in the back country not too far from the coast line. At Yirrkalla the Methodist Overseas Mission established a station some eleven years ago: and now a Mission house on a low cliff dominates the beach, where native huts, mostly of cast-off European timber and tin, are arranged in rows. Beyond the Mission house, on a smaller beach, are other huts; and a church, store-house, dispensary and garden complete the settlement.

This Mission station is the centre for natives whose traditional home camps are at Blue Mud Bay, Trial and Caledon Bays and Port Bradshaw to the south, facing the Gulf of Carpentaria, while visitors come from Groote Eylandt, Woodah Island and Rose River. The Yirrkalla local groups belong mainly to Cape Arnhem, Bremer Island, Melville Bay, and the English Company Islands, as well as to Arnhem Bay: but natives from the Wessel and Elcho Islands, Milingimbi in the Crocodile Islands, and from the mainland to the west, do visit this region. Yirrkalla is thus a strategic base for anthropologists and missionaries who desire to contact members of various groups of a more or less similar cultural and linguistic background.

Geographically speaking, the Yirrkalla groups are comparatively isolated, for to-day only the Mission lugger calls at this depôt, with occasional visits by other Europeans who come by boat and 'plane. Yirrkalla is approximately 500 sea-miles east of Darwin, 130 miles

6: Berndt E-5 (1946-1947) 1951
OI17 Murngin OI17

131 from the Church Missionary Society settlement at Groote Eylandt,
797 and 90 miles from the nearest Methodist Mission at Elcho Island. Apart from the Mission stations of Roper River, Oenpelli, Goulburn Island, Milingimbi, Elcho Island, Yirrkalla and Groote Eylandt, which fringe the great Reserve, there is no other European settlement, except the new base subsidized by the Northern Territory Native Affairs Branch at Ambu Kambu on Groote Eylandt.

136 The whole region is rich in indigenous foods and resources, par-
262 ticularly along the coast. The sea abounds in dugong, turtle, fish, crayfish, shellfish, oysters, and crabs: inland, on the plains and in the jungles, there are wildfowl, emu, wallaby, kangaroo, and smaller animals, fruit, nuts, vegetables, berries, and a large variety of other bush foods, with quantities of fresh-water fish and crocodiles in the streams and rivers; and at times buffalo which have wandered eastwards from the Buffalo Plains west of Oenpelli. So plentiful is the food that, even in bad seasons, the quality may diminish, but rarely the quantity.

b Social Organization:

114 Before proceeding to our main study, it is necessary to outline
184 briefly the structure of north-eastern Arnhem Land society. The work of Professor Lloyd Warner is the most reliable in this respect, while
121 the Rev. T. T. Webb and Dr. Donald Thomson have written on the subject.[1] The reader will find sufficient detail in these for our present
177 purpose. But it should be borne in mind that the organization of Yirrkalla society, although basically similar to that of Milingimbi, is in many respects decidedly different. Dr. Warner viewed aboriginal social life through the eyes of Milingimbi informants, influenced by cultural trends from Cape Stewart and the inland, while the present writer views the same position from the Yirrkalla point of view, uninfluenced to any marked degree from the west, but responding to contact from aboriginal groups to the south and south-west (this is particularly apparent in our study of the Kunapipi cult).

101 These people of eastern Arnhem Land, from Cape Stewart to Blue Mud Bay, had a general term for themselves—the Wulamba group of clans, forming a tribe with a more or less common cultural background: natives outside this region, such as those at Groote Eylandt, called them the "Balamumu" confederacy. Balamumu may
614 be broadly translated as "those of the sea", that is, coastal people.
197 The varying dialects (termed *mata*, "tongue") of these clans (*mala*)
616

1. L. Warner, *A Black Civilization*, New York and London, 1937; T. T. Webb, Tribal Organization in Eastern Arnhem Land, *Oceania*, Vol. III, No. 4, pp. 406-411; A. P. Elkin, Marriage and Descent in East Arnhem Land, *Oceania*, Vol. III, No. 4, pp. 412-416; D. Thomson, *Interim General Report of Preliminary Expedition to Arnhem Land, Northern Territory of Australia*, 1935-36, Department of Interior, Canberra, 1936, pp. 31-34.

6: Berndt E-5 (1946-1947) 1951
OI17 Murngin OI17

"Come on, sister", cried the *gungman*. "It's no good for me; my blood is coming out, and the Snake is smelling it and coming closer. It's better for you to go on dancing."

So the younger sister continued, and again Julunggul stopped and watched; but as the snake looked, her eyes were still focused on the entrance to the hut, and from time to time she breathed out flashes of lightning. In this way, the Wauwalak took it in turns to dance; when the younger sister danced, the Snake stopped; but when the older one continued, she came forward again. So the younger girl danced longer than the other, and as she swayed from side to side the intensive activity caused her menstruation to begin; then the Python, smelling more blood, came forward without hesitation.

Frightened, the Wauwalak ran into their hut, and with the baby, sat waiting inside. Slowly Julunggul drew nearer, twisting her body all round the outside of the hut, and put her head into the aperture. Seeing the women and the child, she sprayed them with saliva (called *ngeiakngeiakma*) from her throat, to make them very slippery; this covered their bodies, so that their skin became soft and easy for swallowing. Then Julunggul opened her mouth and swallowed first the baby, then the mother. As the elder sister was being swallowed, even when only her head and breasts were protruding from the Snake's mouth, she called out *kei'wa ! kei'wa !* But the Snake took no notice; she turned to the *wirlkul* and swallowed her too.

Then Julunggul slowly returned to Muruwul well; she entered it, and stood erect, with head upright and high out of the water. Beside this female Julunggul was her husband, also Julunggul, who had stayed in the well. They both belong to the Li:alauwermiri linguistic group.

These Snakes are so high that they can see all over the country—right down towards the Crocodile Islands and Cape Stewart; away into the interior of Arnhem Land, out to Elcho Island, the English Company Islands and the Wessels, to Arnhem Bay and Cape Arnhem, and down towards Port Bradshaw, Trial Bay, Caledon and Blue Mud Bays, even as far as Rose River. Out on the Wessel Islands at Guluma, they could see two other Rock Pythons, *wirikri* and *kaiambul*, standing up erect.

"What is your language?" these two asked the Snake who had swallowed the Wauwalak.

"We are Li:alauwermiri. What is yours?"

"We are Ba'rangu."

Other *dua* Pythons also erected themselves, and the Li:alauwermiri Snakes asked them in turn what their languages were. There were Ri:radjingu, Kalpu, Marakulu, Djarlwak, Wurungguku, Marangu, Kopateiindamiri, Lultma'rangu, Dapingu, Ngeimil, Gwolamala, Djapu, Grutawatumiri, Djambarpingu, Dadawi and others.

6: Berndt E-5 (1946-1947) 1951
O117 Murngin O117

Wauwalak sheltered, and into which the Julunggul came, the *murlk* symbolizes the uterus of the Mother (the Wauwalak or Djanggawul). Old aborigines say: "You know, when the Julunggul went into the hut, we mean that a penis is entering a woman's vagina, and this hut is a uterus too: that is why we have it on the sacred ground, for it reminds us that everything must come from the Mother's uterus. That is how we came in the Dreaming; and people still continue to come in that way, don't they? And why do we have that Julunggul? Well, don't we have to have a penis to open up and inseminate the woman, so that she can give birth to children? And when the Julunggul swallows the Wauwalak, that is like a penis being swallowed by a vagina, only we put it the other way around. Now, when we hold our big rituals, we do the very same things, because we want the seasons to come, and things to grow, and people to be born: that is the real meaning of what we do".

The Kunapipi rituals have been described in some detail by Dr. Warner (*op. cit.* pp. 290–311), and the reader is referred to this for comparisons. We will mention only various features found in the Yirrkalla region, indicating their relation to the Wauwalak mythology, and interpreting (from native explanations) the actions of the neophytes. It is beyond the scope of this work to record minute details of each stage of the ceremony, for this would entail description of dancing and many irrelevant actions, individual interpretations, and the whole interaction of men and women in and away from the sacred ground. Some of the Kunapipi songs, used both on the sacred ground and in the main camp, are given in Chapters VII and VIII, and these reveal certain details not treated here.

* * * *

The Kunapipi is held usually in the dry season, when food is plentiful; for during this ceremony people are reaping the benefits of performances held in the previous year, and at the same time are preparing for the coming wet season and the subsequent growth of food. Ceremonies may extend over a period of two weeks to two months, and in unusual cases as long as two years. But now, when the Mission frowns on the Kunapipi and its attendant rituals, it may be brought to a close after a few days with the result that much of the intricate symbolism is omitted. The principal Kunapipi leader is usually a man of the Li:alauwermiri or an affiliated linguistic group, or one whose totemic *rangga*, *marciin* objects, or song cycle are associated with Muruwul sacred well and the Wauwalak. In the Yirrkalla region the Kunapipi leaders may have come from Rose River, being members of groups which are in other respects culturally alien, or from *dua* clans near Rose River who have obtained the Kunapipi from further south.

6: Berndt E-5 (1946-1947) 1951
O117 Murngin O117

the mound piled beside the *ba'uma*. When the Wauwalak actors see the Snake, they act as if "they are shamed", here termed *g(w)o:ra'nganbinganbi*. They are "shamed" because they have the child, and their blood is running.[9]

When this dance is over, two *dua* men bring out a pole from the darkness of the bush beside the sacred ground, and hold it horizontally, waist-high from the ground, on the concave side of the *ba'uma*. Within the crescent trench lie the young boys, and on the opposite (the convex, though sometimes on the concave) side of the *ba'uma* the *jelmalandji* stand, held by two men. Then, to the ritual crying of all participants, the *jelmalandji* are pushed over so that they hit the pole and tumble to the ground. They are picked up, and pushed over again; this is repeated several times, until the feathered ornaments on top of the *jelmalandji* fall off. The Julunggul are falling over, after swallowing the Wauwalak.

Then the young boys are removed from the *ba'uma* and placed on the mound beside it, while the *jelmalandji* are put in their place. Fire-sticks are thrown into the *ba'uma*, to burn the grass and paperbark surrounding the central poles of the *jelmalandji*. At the same time men open their arm veins, sprinkling blood on one another and into the trench; this is the blood of the Wauwalak, and blood itself symbolizes life. Rows of dancing men come down the sacred ground and along the shallow trench, to and around the *ba'uma*, pushing the mound into the trench and gradually filling the hole, until the earth from dancing feet covers the *jelmalandji*, and the ground is flattened "so that no one will see that trench".

This completes the main section of the Kunapipi: the sequence of these rituals may be changed according to the inclination of the totemic leaders, or some may be omitted.

* * * *

This is followed by two concluding features: the ceremonial exchange of wives, and the return of the young boys into secular camp life. The latter always takes place at Yirrkalla; but local aborigines say that the former is less common, and it does not seem to be well integrated with indigenous social behaviour. Mission pressure has been brought to bear, in recent years, on the performance of the Kunapipi, and especially on ceremonial intercourse; but it is still practised at Milingimbi and Rose River, and away from white supervision on the settlements.

In other parts of the Territory where Kunapipi holds sway, and where "Big Sunday" is an integral part of native religious life, ceremonial copulation brings these rituals to a climax. It represents a

9. The word "shame" signifies "shyness", the normal feeling a menstruating woman feels towards a man who observes her blood. The European cultural connotation is lacking in this pidgin translation of the native term.

6: Berndt E-5 (1946-1947) 1951
OI17 Murngin OI17

CHAPTER XII

FINALE

771 794 The foregoing chapters have indicated something of the fundamental doctrine of the Kunapipi cult, based as it is on the essential human and animal drives of food and sex, and including such important aspects as the maintenance of food supplies, and procreation, necessary for the continuation of both the human and natural species. In this respect the Kunapipi religious cult is not unlike many others that express the hopes and desires of simple and sophisticated peoples alike. And even when its principal intent is materialistic, it does not exclude spiritual conceptions: in fact, these latter are of major importance.

Here, in Aboriginal Australia, among contemporary aborigines, exists this vivid and vital cult, expressing their own religious view of life: it is correlated with their traditional background and social institutions, and so intimately concerns their spiritual personality structure. Moreover, it is well adapted to their particular environment, since the great Spirit Beings themselves are associated with the country the aborigines know and love; and each man, woman and child has a part in this religious concept, for he (or she) is akin to the Mother. That is to say, their religion is a response to their particular material and spiritual requirements, in such a way that it is a very real and important aspect of each person's life. There is no sharp demarcation between secular and sacred life, because the one is so closely interwoven with the other. This religious concept, too, is not confined to men; it is equally important and significant to women. Each sex has its own particular sphere of activity and interest.

The religion of an indigenous native group, which has had little or no alien contact, is a living faith, something quite inseparable from the pattern of everyday life and thought.

177 771 794 797 With the introduction of alien ideas, through intensive European contact, this fundamental faith is shattered to a greater or lesser degree, according to the intensity and type of that contact. In most parts of Arnhem Land where Missions have been established, there is the impact of Christian teaching, of ideals which are not intimately concerned with the life of the native people, which often contrast sharply with indigenous traditional themes, and which belong to a strange and different cultural background. The repercussions of this impact, therefore, are frequently severe.

6: Berndt E-5 (1946-1947) 1951
OI17 Murngin OI17

Christianity, with its attendant ritual and belief, is apparently inseparable, in this context, from Western European culture, and for that reason it assumes a dominant and militant aspect. The indigenous culture, however, lacking the other's wide range of material objects and technology, and the subtleties of fanatic evangelization, seems as a rule powerless to resist.

Missionaries on the north coast of Arnhem Land and elsewhere in this region have made little attempt to understand the underlying motives of native ideology and their religious view of life. The majority (with a couple of exceptions) contend that Aboriginal religion is not a religion in the strict sense of the word, for to most of them religion is translatable only in terms of Christianity. With this conventional bias, they see only certain superficial aspects of such cults as the Kunapipi,[1] which they have not attempted to link with fundamental belief. They have not appreciated the importance of the Fertility Mother and the Rainbow Snake, nor the stress on certain erotic features. Ceremonial copulation is viewed as debauchery and unbridled lust, while women are said to live in virtual terror of the use which is made of them at such a time. In our study of the Kunapipi cult, as it normally functions, we have observed a different picture.

It is not our purpose here, however, to defend Aboriginal religious belief and activity, nor to discuss the relevant virtues of each religion. We need mention only that in the region under discussion the impact of Christianity, as presented by the Missions, has produced some change in the indigenous religion. Moreover, change of this kind has been brought about not only through the active interference of the Church, but through the gradual and indirect introduction of European secular concepts. The Mission is not only an agency for the Christian religion. It is the vanguard too of all the more materialistic elements which attend European cultural life; for Christianity means, to most, Europeanization. The balanced life and economy of the aborigines has been irrevocably upset, with resulting disorganization. The Kunapipi too has suffered, and is rarely seen in its entirety to-day, although its basic rituals and concepts have as yet (in Arnhem Land for example) remained relatively unaltered. Its adherents have, however, been driven to secrecy; and its ceremonies are for the most part carried out in the bush, away from Mission Stations and settlements. Ceremonial copulation has been frowned upon by the Missions, and in some cases this element of the Kunapipi is either omitted altogether or carried out surreptitiously.

On the other hand, the Missions' almost unanimous opposition to

1. The question of sexual behaviour, in particular, seems to arouse strong reactions, when the indigenous culture offers manifestations that differ widely from accepted European conventions. It is apparently simpler in this case to condemn, than to study and investigate without prejudice.

6: Berndt E-5 (1946-1947) 1951
OI17 Murngin OI17

Kunapipi performances has served to strengthen native belief in its efficacy; but this tendency will last only as long as do the members of "the older generation".

By the driving underground, so to speak, of the Kunapipi, its sexual element has become considerably accentuated. In some cases, ritual copulation has lost a certain proportion of its sacred aura and serves as an excuse for promiscuity. This aspect is particularly apparent in contact areas where detribalization has taken place, and intensive cultural disintegration has resulted.

For example, on war-time Army Settlements during 1944–46 the performance of the Kunapipi (or "Big Sunday", as it was called) was forbidden by Civil and Army authorities alike, on the grounds that the big religious ceremonies entailed interruption of normal work. As a result of this prohibition very few of the sacred ceremonies were carried out, although a number were performed surreptitiously some distance from the Settlements, and were consequently of brief duration. One development of this external control was the accentuation of sexual promiscuity through the medium of the "Big Sunday", and the indiscriminate use of sacred tabus for the materialistic ends of a minority. In the latter case, food, clothing, and other goods were sometimes declared sacred, and could in this way be taken over by the person or the group pronouncing the tabu.

Whole areas of the settlement would, unknown to the womenfolk, be declared ritually sacred to men: latrines, washing-sheds, camps, roads and so on were pronounced tabu-ed to women. A woman inadvertently entering the demarcated area would be threatened with punishment, which she could avert through payment of goods or sexual favours: usually, of course, she preferred to "pay" with coitus.

This practice reached such proportions that Settlement officers endeavoured strongly to oppose it, and cited it as an additional reason for prohibiting the Kunapipi ceremonies; nevertheless the habit persisted, and seems to have aroused interest and enjoyment among both men and women. On the Daly River, west of Darwin, a rather similar practice has become institutionalized, in attempts to reinforce a religious life which is fast disappearing because of the disrupting effects of local European contact over a comparatively long period. Other examples, too, could be brought forward to confirm this particular distortion of "Big Sunday" religion.

But these features are abnormal; they have been brought about by circumstances beyond the control of the natives themselves, and represent merely one unpleasant result of uncontrolled or badly planned contact between two widely differing cultures. They would not normally appear, for they are not a part of indigenous religious life.

We might well ask what is the future of a cult like the Kunapipi.

8: Berndt E-5 (1946-1950) 1954
OI17 Murngin OI17

CHAPTER 1

BACKGROUND

Arnhem Land, through the centuries, has attracted to its shores a variety of both Asiatic and European voyagers, some interested in exploration for its own sake, and some for economic or commercial reasons. Between the middle of the sixteenth century and the beginning of the seventeenth, this northern part of Australia became known to the Western World through the discoveries of the Dutch and Portuguese.[1] Considerably earlier, however, the coastal regions of Arnhem Land had been visited regularly by Indonesian traders. The date of their first arrival has not been definitely established: but we can make tentative suggestions, based on the traditional records which the Arnhem Land natives have handed down from one generation to another.

In addition to this fairly intensive contact over a long period, Arnhem Land became comparatively well-known during the last phase of Malay-Macassan association with our north coast, and during the exploration of certain English voyagers just before and during the establishment of European settlements.

Later on came the attempted European settlement of this part of the Northern Territory, and the exploitation of its waters for marine products. Japanese and other Asiatics, as well as Europeans, took part in pearling operations; and Christian Mission stations were gradually established at various places all round the Arnhem Land coast. Today only the Missions remain. The whole vast region of Arnhem Land, some 31,200 square miles, is now an Aboriginal Reserve.

In this study of Arnhem Land, we shall see how events fall into their proper historical perspective, from the earliest known

8: Berndt E-5 (1946-1950) 1954
OI17 Murngin OI17

175 especially in the region about Caledon Bay and Blue Mud Bay.
648 Some Europeans too were involved in spearings, so that by the
177 1930's the Aborigines of these parts had gained a reputation for being "savage and warlike".

The natives, however, were not entirely to blame for their occasional attacks on invading strangers, who had not the long-standing trade ties of economic reciprocity and friendship that the Indonesians had enjoyed. When we look more closely into the underlying reasons we can understand that the Aborigines might well have resisted the insidious forms of exploitation, the low bartering estimates, and the constant interference with their womenfolk. Matters were accentuated by a punitive expedition led by police, which went with horses from Milingimbi to Blue Mud Bay and Caledon Bay,[17] and indiscriminately shot a number of Aborigines; while the killing of a police constable on Woodah Island, near Groote Eylandt, aroused a *crescendo* of publicity and outcry in Southern newspapers of the day.[18]

175 By 1930 several Mission stations had been set up at various
177 places along the coast, so that in succeeding years most of the Aborigines in this region were in more or less constant contact
197 with missionaries. A Church Missionary Society expedition in 1934, and a local trepanger, apprehended some natives who were asociated with a Japanese massacre at Caledon Bay and brought them to Darwin for trial. Soon after this, in 1935, Dr Donald Thomson set out on a pacificatory expedition with the purpose of finding out the reasons for the hostility of these natives, the extent of Japanese contact, and the general nature of local conditions.[19] During the north-west monsoon season of 1935-36 and during 1936-37 unrest among these Aborigines became more marked, mainly owing to the invasion of the Arnhem Land Aboriginal Reserve[20] by large numbers of Japanese and European traders.[21] Missionary enterprise was extended and intensified too, attacking indigenous forms of social behaviour and morality in a way which met with little positive resistance — although attempts were made to oppose the less insidious intrusion of traders, bent on purely economic (and sexual) exploitation. Evangelisation became closely co-ordinated with the aim of establishing all along

8: Berndt E-5 (1946-1950) 1954
OI17 Murngin OI17

the coast, centres of white settlement in the form of Mission stations. These Mission bodies were interested mainly in the problems of becoming self-supporting, of saving the Aborigines' souls, and of disseminating European beliefs and conventions.

A little before war was declared between Australia and Japan the visits of Japanese traders and pearlers to the Arnhem Land coast were curtailed, and finally forbidden altogether. Army, Air Force and Naval bases were formed in various parts of the Northern Territory, particularly after the bombing of Darwin in 1942-43. On the north-eastern coast the main camps of this kind were at Gove (Yirrkalla Mission settlement), Milingimbi, and the Wessel Islands, while there was a civil aviation and Air Force base at Groote Eylandt. Aborigines of these parts came subsequently into close contact with several thousands of Air Force and Army (as well as Naval) personnel. They were indented for menial work and employed in a variety of ways. Boats and 'planes were continually passing to and fro;[22] and the isolated crashes of a few 'planes, the activity of Army camp life and entertainment, and other phenomena of an artificial and abnormal life, heightened and altered the tempo of indigenous life. Traditional ceremonies and food-collecting were interrupted and curtailed, and the equilibrium of social life in general was far more deeply disturbed than it had been throughout all the preceding centuries of alien contact.

When these military establishments were finally abandoned (the last, Gove, in April 1946) the Aborigines were left to Missions whose staffs had been depleted, and who could not provide steady employment for the many natives who clustered about their stations. So the natives found themselves longing for the old times, when food and trade goods were generously distributed. The customary staid smoothness of Mission life, with its calm treatment of religion, they found depressing. Where, they asked, were the war-time picture shows, that brought before them rough-riding cowboys, lingering love scenes, and partially-naked white women, and the strange musical accompaniments of this form of entertainment? This nostalgia for past pleasures led to increasing signs of irresponsibility among the younger people, a

000

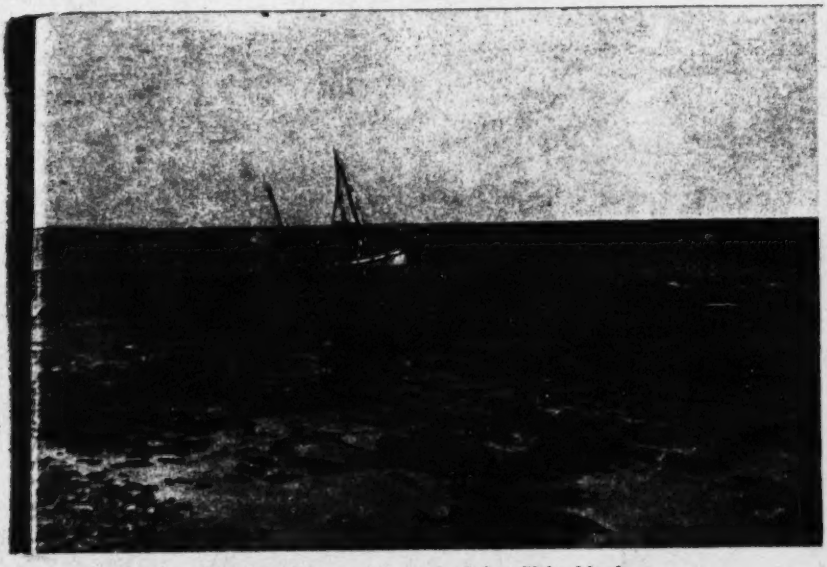
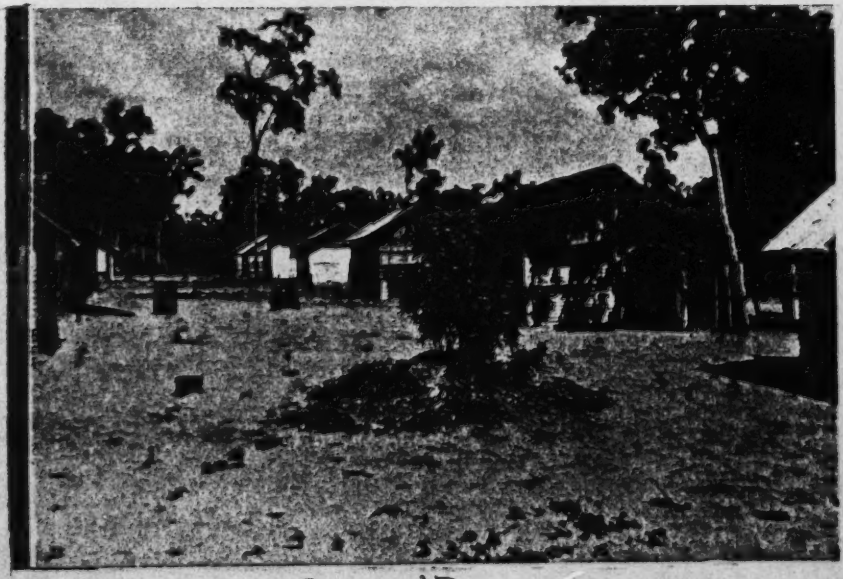


Plate 14a: A lugger being unloaded at Elcho Island.

Plate 14b: Yirrkalla Mission Settlement.

797
361



[p. 25(I)]

8: Berndt E-5 (1946-1950) 1954
OI17 Murngin OI17

CHAPTER 17

AFTERMATH

The direct repercussions of these murders and killings are of special interest to us here. 175

The great Arnhem Land Reserve had been declared in 1931, as a result of Bleakley's Report[1] of 1928, and a conference held in 1929[2] by representatives of Missions, societies and associations interested in Aboriginal welfare. This report and this conference were indications of changing public opinion throughout Australia in relation to the Aboriginal question. More and more people and societies were willing to offer sympathy and, what was at that time most important, constructive suggestions. 648 797

The establishing of this Reserve, it was hoped, would put an end to undesirable alien contact in the shape of European and Japanese[3] traders, pearlers and beachcombers, thus halting the detribalisation of the Aborigines and ensuring greater opportunities for missionary endeavour. The Reserve was, officially, inviolable. Only missionaries, officials, and other accredited people were to be permitted within its boundaries. But it was quite impossible to patrol adequately such a long coast-line and so large a territory, and from time to time unauthorised people did enter the Reserve. This was especially the case during the first few years, when there was still a sprinkling of trepangers and pearlers, and Japanese infiltration became actually intensified. It was during these years, too, that the Aborigines committed most of the killings mentioned in the foregoing chapters.

From the natives' point of view, the formation of this Reserve meant nothing at all. Most of them knew nothing about it, and those who did cared less. Why should they bother about a 175 648

8: Berndt E-5 (1946-1950) 1954
OI17 Murngin OI17

Reserve? It was their own territory, where their ancestors had lived, and they were bound to it by strong spiritual ties. Laws were passed by an alien Government, about which they knew very little, and which was (so they thought at that time) no concern of theirs. Japanese, and a few Europeans, were still round the coast; conditions had not perceptibly changed.

Since the termination of Indonesian contact there had been a lag in trading, but the Missions, which since 1916 had been spreading along the coast, were helping to fill this gap. From that date, and much earlier in the Roper River area, the Aborigines began to drift into these Mission stations and to avail themselves of the opportunities they offered. They did not as yet distinguish between the different forms of contact. The Japanese aims of exploitation were, in their eyes, very much the same as those of the Europeans, while they scarcely differentiated between these white traders and the missionaries. European traders and missionaries, officials and police, were representatives of an alien form of Government, which did not recognise the hereditary rights and legal codes of the Aborigines themselves.

How could these people judge differently, when they observed from actual cases that the missionaries, trepangers and police worked hand in hand together – as, for instance, during the Caledon Bay trial? They realised too that the Europeans were unwilling to believe them, particularly in the matter of evidence given in court. Their dialects were not understood, and the interpreters at their disposal not always reliable. What was justice to them was crime to the Europeans, an outlook largely determined by the cultural pattern of each group.

So the natives were thrown on their own resources, and felt obliged to settle the matter of their defence in their own way. When this conflicted with European interests, they seem to have realised that they would have to sublimate their own views, or else pay the full penalty of acting on their own initiative; and this penalty involved either physical violence or imprisonment or both. In the white man's court of law the Aborigines were inarticulate, and powerless to defend themselves. Had they known that an increasing number of white Australians were interested in their welfare, and ready to step forward in their

8: Berndt E-5 (1946-1950) 1954
OI17 Murngin OI17

175 648 announced that a punitive expedition would be sent to Arnhem Land to avenge the death of Constable McColl on Woodah Island. "Despite strong protests from missionaries and others," continued the report, "the Federal Government has sent all supplies required to equip a formidable punitive expedition against the Aborigines in Arnhem Land. Federal Ministers who have had experience of native administration favour a punitive expedition. Lieut.-Col. R. H. Weddell (then Government Resident) strongly urges the necessity of strong measures to teach the natives a lesson. It is contended that unless police authority is upheld the natives will get out of hand, and the massacre of white residents and missionaries will follow. It is argued that if once the natives get the idea they can kill with impunity there is no knowing where they will stop. On the other hand, it is claimed the sending out of a small police party, which included McColl, was ill-advised, as it only roused the natives and incited them to attack".

[797] Missionaries and their associates in the South opposed such measures. They held meetings and protested to the Government, to some effect. But not all missionaries, apparently, were of this opinion — as witness, for example, Mr Dyer's evidence in the McColl murder case. Moderate opinion in the South swayed the Government to decide eventually against a punitive expedition. However, a police party under Constables Morey and Graham was sent out to Groote Eylandt via the Roper River. They did not plan to use Mission transport, for "as far as is possible care will be taken to remove the impression from the minds of the Aboriginals that the police are working in conjunction with the missionaries. Despite reference in the Southern Press regarding a punitive expedition, Superintendent Stretton emphasised his assertion that no punitive expedition of a death-dealing nature had ever been contemplated by the Administration in connection with any police party sent or to be sent to Caledon Bay. No extensive patrol work would be done by the police party either on Groote Eylandt or by boat, in the near or distant vicinity. The police would simply camp there as a protective party until after the wet season".[5]

8: Berndt E-5 (1946-1950) 1954
OI17 Murngin OI17

175 interfering with or kidnapping their lubras, or were they shooting
648 at or over them, or were they fraternising with the blacks, one of the gravest errors a white man can commit? If any of these happenings had occurred other than loot, the Abo. has no redress. The only law he recognises is to kill. He cannot and does not know how to take proceedings against the white man, and furthermore would not be given a hearing were these killings of the white men on the coast caused by any of these happenings? None has bothered to investigate. The Abo. killed a white, that's sufficient. We know Japanese have been killed for their interference with lubras, but what about the white murdered men? Was their crime the same? I cannot tell, because it has never been investigated. My maxim is 'A good Abo. is a dead Abo.' but when it comes to fair play I'm with the Abo. as well as the white man. . . . The greatest mistake is to allow the Abo. to step over the line, fraternise with them, and allow the Abo. to size them up and then their troubles begin, ending only in one way – camp looted or the men murdered".

Mr R. MacDonald, of the Northern Territory Gaol Service, also had comments to make. "When the natives of Arnhem Land are treated decently they are friendly, but imposition and ill treatment are keenly resented. That is why many Japanese trepang fishers and a few white men have felt the full blast of the Aborigines' hostility, and why Arnhem Land is reputed to be peopled by murderous blacks. Men fall very low in those waters. If they would only let the blacks alone they would be all right. They promise the natives all sorts of things, take them hundreds of miles away from their homes, and leave them with nothing. The black will do a lot for a promise – but he'll also do a lot if that promise is not fulfilled".[9]

175 Towards the end of 1933, the Commonwealth Government
648 made a grant to meet the cost of the peace expedition that the
797 Church Missionary Society had sent to Caledon Bay. It was decided that the Roper River Mission should be closed and a new one opened at Caledon Bay, since the establishment of a Mission station was considered to be an effective means of checking lawlessness among the local natives.[10] But some missionaries were opposed to this move, and the Presbyterian *Messenger* protested:

8: Berndt E-5 (1946-1950) 1954
OI17 Murngin OI17

"We believe it is a grave blunder to call in the missionaries to become agents of the police . . ."[11] The peace expedition had no really tangible result. There was an unsuccessful attempt to establish a Mission station at Caledon Bay; and the Roper River Mission station did not close down.

An important consequence of the Woodah Island and Caledon Bay murders, the outcry in the Southern Press, and the general agitation of the Administration and missionary bodies and associations, was the appointment of Dr Donald Thomson to visit eastern and north-eastern Arnhem Land. On his first expedition, which lasted from March 1935 until January 1936, he covered a wide area, sailing right around the coast and making some trips into the interior.[12]

As a result, Dr Thomson made certain recommendations regarding the future welfare and government of the Arnhem Landers.[13] It was desirable, he said, to have "absolute segregation. . . . The social structure *in toto* should be preserved as an essential factor in the life of these people". and "the nomadic habits of these people must be regarded as an integral part of their culture. The collecting of natives, not detribalised, into compounds or institutions should be prohibited. If it is desired to teach Christianity to these people, it should be insisted that the Christian teacher or missionary be prepared to visit the people in their own country, and not to gather them about a station or Mission school". Dr Thomson suggested also the "establishment and maintenance of patrols to move about among the nomadic tribes of Arnhem Land, in particular to protect the natives from interference and exploitation, and to maintain a state of domestic peace. Many of the 'attacks' that have occurred in this territory have undoubtedly been merely retaliatory measures to which the natives have been goaded. A particularly unfortunate aspect of these incidents is the fact that vengeance may sometimes be delayed and fall ultimately upon an entirely innocent individual". He listed special qualifications for men entrusted with these patrols, and advised that a medical officer should be employed.

A number of his other recommendations have a more general applicatino and do not specifically relate to Arnhem Land: 'the abolition of the anomalous system under which police constables

8: Berndt E-5 (1946-1950) 1954
OI17 Murngin OI17

175 648 undesirable elements. Dr Thomson, for example, has commented on the demoralising effects of Japanese association with the Aborigines.

Summarising, then, we can observe that the long period of Baijini-Macassan contact resulted in some measure of adjustment between alien and Aboriginal; and while no other elements were present, the *status quo* was maintained. With the advent of another cultural group conditions were altered, and the period of unsettlement commenced. As still other elements made their appearance on the north coast, this unrest among the Aborigines was accentuated, and lasted more or less continuously until 1942, when they began to experience repercussions from the second World War.

However, the establishment of the Arnhem Land Reserve, the murders of the 1930's, and the pacification expeditions which followed, did herald a new epoch. And although this period of unsettlement continued, mainly owing to the presence of large numbers of Japanese, it was actually drawing to a close. The administration was becoming more directly interested in the welfare of the Arnhem Landers. Recommendations relating to Aboriginal policy were being drafted, missionary enterprise was being extended, with more apparent official backing, and a Native Affairs Branch was gradually being formed. These were the principal indications that the old period was coming to an end, even if the new ideas could not yet be put into practice. Indeed, their execution was postponed for some years by the entry of the Japanese into the second World War, and the placing of the Territory under complete military control.

175 797 Let us pause to consider the position of the Missions in Arnhem Land, and their part in the general overall picture of culture contact.

Between 1846 and 1848, a Roman Catholic missionary priest named Rev. D. Angelo Confalonière was stationed at Port Essington.[1] In 1900, also in western Arnhem Land, a small Mission station was started under the control of a Mr Lennox, but its stay was brief and unsuccessful.[2] The Roper River Mission began operations in the first years of this century (1908) and extended its activities to Groote Eylandt in 1921, concentrating there at

8: Berndt E-5 (1946-1950) 1954
OI17 Murngin OI17

first on half-caste children, but later taking in full-blooded Aborigines. During the early years of the Groote Eylandt station there was continual dissension between the missionaries and Aborigines. At one time it was found necessary to barricade the Mission buildings and to build a stockade against an expected attack by mainland Aborigines, who were camping nearby in some force. These were stormy days. But eventually a more or less static camp of peaceful natives grew up around the Mission, and an increasing number came into direct contact with the missionaries. At Oenpelli, too, in western Arnhem Land, the Church Missionary Society in 1925 took over a Government Aboriginal cattle station which had been managed by the former buffalo shooter "Paddy" Cahill. The station was allowed to pass into Mission hands mainly because it was, at the time, failing to pay its way.

The Methodists opened their first station at Goulburn Island in 1916. In the words of one of the missionaries: "A few natives arrived and offered to help with the work, and shortly afterwards there were a hundred men, women and children on the station. The girls and boys were induced to attend the open-air school and think of the Mission station as their home".[3] There were half-castes here too, but a little before the War they were moved to the new station that was set up at Croker Island.[4] Later on Elcho Island Mission was opened; the missionaries withdrew to Milingimbi when the Petroleum Company commenced operations but finally returned. Milingimbi Mission continued to function. In 1935 the Methodists commenced a fourth Mission station at Yirrkalla, in the north-eastern corner of Arnhem Land.

That is to say, at the time of the most intense Japanese contact on the north coast seven Mission stations had been established, fringing the Reserve from west to east, and from north-east to south. These Missions were in contact with the great majority of local Aborigines, except for two or three small "pockets" of people in the Liverpool district, on the mainland south of Milingimbi, and around Rose River. Even these had indirect and spasmodic association with the Mission stations. Points of white settlement in the shape of Missions, then, as now,

8: Berndt E-5 (1946-1950) 1954
OI17 Murngin OI17

virtually encircled Arnhem Land. Static camps of natives (severely criticised in Dr Thomson's reports) were formed at all these places, so that today, and as the years pass, more and more natives look to one or more of these stations as their "home". They remain in the Bush for increasingly shorter periods, finding it always harder to keep away from these centres as they come to rely on the introduced food and trade goods. And so they find it necessary to pay lip-service to Christianity.

We are not concerned here with discussing in detail missionary endeavour in this region, because this would require a great deal more space than can be spared for it here. Readers interested in this form of contact should consult the relevant Government reports, as well as those issued by the Mission bodies themselves.[5] No scientific study of this problem has as yet been made in Australia. Here, however, we are interested only in broad principles. More detailed discussion of Mission and administrative policies, against a background of the general Australian situation, is given by Professor Elkin in his *Citizenship for the Aborigines*.[5a]

Mission activities before the recent War were virtually confined to establishing themselves on a more or less self-supporting basis. And since they were centres of white settlement, with them came many features of European culture. This is an important point to remember. These missionaries not only brought certain elements of their own Christian doctrine, but also carried with them the essential ingredients of their own culture. Whether or not the missionary desired it, the acceptance of Christianity by the Aborigines thus involved their simultaneous adoption of European ways, at the expense of their own culture and their own religion. If the Aborigines wanted to live in peaceful association with these missionaries and to receive their alleged benefits in the form of food, goods and education, they were obliged either to discard their own way of life or to adjust it in some way to changing conditions. In actual practice they were left with no alternative. Conditions were unsettled, alien influences demoralising, and tribal disintegration imminent. Gradually they drifted into the stations, hoping to take advantage of their presence, and at the same time to retain their traditional heritage.

8: Berndt E-5 (1946-1950) 1954
OI17 Murngin OI17

But it was not possible for any group, under the circumstances in which the Arnhem Landers found themselves, to have their cake and also to eat it. 175 177 197

The Missions were interested in gathering together groups of natives around the stations. Only in this way could settlements be built up, and the new ways firmly entrenched in the minds of the natives. They built houses in which to live, and churches in which to propagate their religion – for this was, after all, the main reason for their presence. Gardens were cultivated; and some of them engaged in trading; for missions had to be economically "safe", just like other forms of business. Schools at this period functioned very intermittently. Their range of subjects was limited and related primarily to religious training. Aboriginal children were not given a clear picture of European culture and its relation to the rest of the world, nor taught how to adjust themselves to these new conditions. Food was distributed either for work accomplished, or virtually as "bait" to attract natives to visit the stations, or to attend church or school. But on the whole the work of missionaries seems to have been dictated by purely humanitarian ideals. [361]

The functioning of their stations depended greatly on the personality of the superintendents, and on their tolerant and sympathetic understanding of Aboriginal custom and belief. The Missions were acting as bulwarks against more unpleasant aspects of European and alien contact. They did demonstrate to the natives that all Europeans were not the same, and that some had more kindly intentions than others. Missionaries attended to the sick, the aged and the young. But these early years of Mission contact were mainly occupied with "digging in", with establishing their position and developing a formula by which to approach their problems. The natives had now a refuge to which they could retreat. In spite of all this, the presence of Missions did not prevent their contact with the Japanese and the European traders. 175 197

With the first raid on Darwin on 19 February 1942, when the North was thrown into confusion, Japanese trading activities ceased. Plans were made to evacuate female missionaries (as well as civilian women and children), and many of the mixed-bloods from Croker Island and Groote Eylandt; and the whole northern 175 648

8: Berndt E-5 (1946-1950) 1954
OI17 Murngin OI17

old Indonesian days of plenty. Organised work was available; and in return they received food, clothing, tobacco, and other objects which they considered necessary to their well-being. This proved to be another disintegrative feature, for indigenous forms of economy were disturbed, and the Aborigines came to rely on the European to supply their immediate needs. There was not, now, the urgent need to hunt and forage for food; and they tended to congregate fairly regularly in one place, usually on the Mission station or near the military settlement.

This particular form of contact is so recent that is is very difficult to see its problems in true perspective. It is possible only to observe the effects with care, and to conjecture as to the future.

Civilians were allowed to return to Darwin on 28 February 1946, and civil administration was resumed from the end of July 1945.[8] In the years that followed, up to the present day, the Missions have been concerned primarily with re-establishing themselves, after losing so much ground during the War period. Mission staffs were depleted, and only now are being built up again. New buildings had to be constructed, new gardens cultivated. In fact, all aspects of their work needed reconstruction. Some Missions suffered more than others; but actually all benefited from this renovating approach, for most were desperately in need of this even before the War. The old relatively lethargic ways of the past, although they were virtually pioneering days, had to go, if Mission contact was to be of constructive value to the Aborigines themselves. Saving souls for the indefinite future was really to no purpose; the natives required practical help in the problems which beset them. And today the majority of the missionaries realise this aspect of their work. They are educational and humanitarian agents of their culture, and their presentation of formal religion should take a secondary place.

If the long period of unsettlement in Arnhem Land is to end, if the new epoch of which we spoke previously is to continue, and if the Aborigines are to be adjusted to changing conditions and a European way of life, then the missionary and the administrator must have a common purpose: to develop among these Aborigines some understanding of European culture and ideals,

8: Berndt E-5 (1946-1950) 1954
OI17 Murngin OI17

to retain the best elements in their own culture, to set them on a firm economic footing, and above all to allow them to think and act for themselves. These aspirations are, as yet, only embryonic. Whether or not they will come to fruition rests primarily on the European agencies within the boundaries of Arnhem Land, and those immediately interested in its future.

During the war years, then, Mission activity was at a standstill. Church services were still held, but schools and training centres are only now being properly organised. Here, again a co-ordinated plan is needed where educational activities are concerned, and recently the Commonwealth Office of Education has been paying some attention to this.

When the Armed Forces withdrew from the greater part of Arnhem Land, the Aborigines were thrown on to the resources of the Missions, and they looked to these centres to fill the gap. Now, as we have seen, many of them are coming to settle more or less permanently around the Mission settlements, and they are demanding employment so that they may maintain the standard of living to which they have grown accustomed. But so far none of the Mission stations has been able to employ all of these potential labourers, and none has adequate means of training them for this work that they desire. In present circumstances these stations can only take a certain number of employees. Before others can be absorbed, new industries must be developed. This, together with education, is one of the most urgent problems facing Missions and administrations today. Employment must be relatively permanent and also remunerative, if it is to have desirable results. There are many incidental problems to be considered as well.

Although some aspects of native traditional life are still virile today, others are showing signs of collapse. Past alien contact has left its mark on the indigenous culture. This is more obvious in western Arnhem Land than in the east, although even there certain elements have almost disappeared. But a well balanced educational approach, including occupational training, should help to arrest social and cultural disintegration, strengthen traditional ties, and provide strength to meet future demands.

8: Berndt E-5 (1946-1950) 1954
OI17 Murngin OI17

197 Today more Northern Territory missionaries and Native Affairs' officers are going out on to the field with these ideas in mind, assisted by some elementary training in anthropology. This is a beginning that promises well for the future. But some missionaries are still distrustful of anthropological methods, and view with uneasiness any plans for the eventual independence of the Aborigines.

In the past, and even now, it has been the practice of the Methodist Overseas Mission to employ Fijian missionaries on its Arnhem Land stations. This has brought about an additional problem. Contact of alien groups with Arnhem Landers has through the years been sufficiently complex without adding still further elements. Such Fijians have tried, often unconsciously, to re-create the conditions of their homeland, to surround themselves with an artificial environment that bears little relation to the problems of the Aborigines.

In 1946 it was proposed to establish a training centre at Gove Settlement, near Yirrkalla, where the Native Affairs' Branch had taken over quantities of Air Force equipment. This in itself was an excellent idea. But the choice of area was unsatisfactory, and being close to the Mission station aroused considerable hostility among the Methodists in the South as well as in the Territory. Today the plans for this ambitious project have been shelved, although it is said that they have not been entirely abandoned. Mission schools are only just beginning to function again, and the Arnhem Landers have no opportunity of availing themselves of secular education.

177 Since the recent War, Arnhem Land has been the focal point of anthropological and other expeditions. Apart from the work of Professor A. P. Elkin and the present writers, in eastern and western Arnhem Land, the Aborigines have been subjected to the large National Geographic party, composed of Australians and Americans. Just what bearing this work will have on the future of Arnhem Land and its people has yet to be seen. Moreover, writers and photographers have travelled through Arnhem Land, although their contact has been relatively superficial. Patrols have been made by members of the Native Affairs' Branch, especially in the Liverpool River district, and around the Cato River near

or medicine-men. Members of the one, whose operations are wholly of an evil character, are known as *ragalk*, while members of the other, whose operations are always of a benign character, are known as *marngit*, or less frequently *gulang*.'

This statement needs qualification, for the cults of the medicineman or *marngit* and the sorcerer or *kalka* in Arnhem Land are not quite as simple as suggested in this account, and the *marngitmirri*—that is, the medicineman, the man who has been initiated and adopted by spirit familiars called *marngit* who help him in the practice of his cult—really belongs to east Arnhem Land, and to the territory east of the Crocodile Islands, coinciding with the area that lacks a typical tribal organization. The somewhat different cult of the *ragalk* or *kalka*, the sorcerer, flourishes at Cape Stewart and to the south and west of this territory. Its stronghold is central and western Arnhem Land. Here, in the territory of the Burara tribe of Cape Stewart which lies immediately west of the Crocodile Group, and among Raimbar'ngo, Ritar'ngo and other tribes of central Arnhem Land, the cult of the *ragalk* flourishes. An informant of Wanguri clan who was linked by his totemic background with the Wallamango declared that the cult of the *marngit* did occur in the neighbouring Burara tribe. But the account given by this man was not impartial and unavoidably gave to the *marngit* of that area a kind of 'aura' of the *kalka* or sorcerer.

It will be clear from what I have said that the two cults are not complementary, except possibly in the Burara tribe. And in east Arnhem Land they certainly do not exist side by side as opposing cults among the same people, as the Revd. T. T. Webb's account implies. The sorcerer or *kalka*, although certainly known to the people east of the Crocodile Islands who live in the stronghold of the *marngitmirri*, and much feared by them as part of the magical stock-in-trade of the *warnba*, the people of the west (strangers) does not exist as a cult in eastern Arnhem Land. The fear in which the sorcerer is held by these people resulted from the transfer of the Methodist Mission from Elcho Island, where it was first established, to Milingimbi in the Crocodile Islands—which, by coincidence, lies on the western fringe of the territory of the Burara, the very home of the *kalk*'.

The present paper is intended to give an account of the *marngitmirri* and their *marngit* and particularly to describe the way in which a man of east Arnhem Land is visited by his *marngit* and initiated as a 'medicineman,' the relationship that exists between the *marngitmirri* and his *marngit* or spirit familiars, and the way in which his *marngit* or spirit familiars test the medicineman before they adopt him.

The coloured plates (I, J) that accompany the paper, as I have stated, represent the *marngit* drawn by three medicinemen of east Arnhem Land. The descriptions with the plates are translations of the information given to me by the medicinemen themselves, generally in their own languages.

The Kalka *and* Ragalk

After I had been working for about two years in eastern Arnhem Land and knew the language well enough to

754 speak and to hear most of what was said except when it was idiomatic or spoken very quickly, I made the following note: 'The cult of the *kalka* or *ragalk* properly belongs to the area of Arnhem Land extending from the Burara of Cape Stewart westwards. It did not exist as a cult to the east of this territory, although greatly feared by these people, but it was an important influence to the west as well as among the interior tribes, the Raimbar'ngo, the Ritar'ngo and others from the Derby Creek, lying south and west of Cape Stewart and the Liverpool River.'

And to this record, the following significant note was added: 'It was unknown to the Tjambarpoingo, the Kalbanuk and to most of the Mandjikai—the "sandfly people"—with the exception of the Wallamango, the latter a people of the Crocodile Islands who claim affinity with Mandjikai *barpuro*.' Wanguri clan is also linked with the same group. *Barpuro*) is a term that is difficult to define in the intricate and aberrant social grouping of this area.
617 It is applied in eastern Arnhem Land to loosely integrated clans often occupying discontinuous tracts of territory, geographically sometimes widely separated, but nevertheless having in common at least some vital and significant part of their total totemic heritage.

124 The immense complexity of this social grouping caused many lengthy digressions among informants and frequently interrupted the collection of long texts in the language to enable difficult points as to the bonds between groups to be clarified and the resultant effects upon the attitudes of
754 people made clear to me. Because the cult of the *ragalk* or
184 sorcerer was known to the Yanango of Mooroonga Island in the Crocodile Group—a clan of Maringo *malla*—who were on the borderline between the east and the west, with many cultural differences as well as differences in social organization, the impact of the *kalka* upon them was not as sudden or as destructive as it was upon the people of Elcho Island. My informants stressed the fact that the Ritar'ngo of the interior, who occupied a big area of country lying between the Liverpool River to the north and the Wilton (a tributary of the upper Roper) in the south, knew and practised the cult of the *kalka*, as did their neighbours the Raimbar'ngo.

It will be clear from the foregoing that the two cults,
[114] the cults of the *marngit* and the *kalka*, are not generally complementary and do not, as Mr. Webb's account implies, occur together among the same people, with the possible exception of the Yanango and Wallamango and the neighbouring Burara. But the Yanango and Wallamango are marginal groups and this has an important influence upon their attitudes towards certain culture traits, and the emphasis placed upon differences tends to exaggerate these.

756 The more or less benevolent *marngitmirri*, the typical medicineman, a kind of general practitioner, with his spirit familiars, is characteristic of the region east of the Crocodile Islands, extending to Cape Arnhem, where the cult of the
777 *ragalk* does not exist.
754 I have stated that prior to the transfer of the Mission
177 from Elcho Island west to the Crocodile Group, the people
184 of the Tjambarpoingo (*dua* moiety) and Kopapoingo-

[p.98(B)]

speaking groups of Elcho Island, the Glyde and Goyder Rivers on the west, and eastwards around Buckingham, Arnhem and Melville Bays, to Cape Arnhem and Port Bradshaw and south to Caledon and Blue Mud Bays, had little actual experience of the sinister cult of the *kalka*. But when the Methodist Mission moved from Elcho Island to the Crocodile Group and set up its headquarters at Milingimbi, an island lying a short distance off the coast, it brought the people who had accompanied the Mission into the very stronghold of a form of secret killing or sorcery that was strange to them. On this account they came to regard the people of the west—whom they called *warnba*, strangers—with fear and suspicion, and they have been more or less at loggerheads with them ever since, resulting in frequent blood feuds, and a considerable loss of life.

For years it was the practice of the natives who had moved from their own countries to the island of Milingimbi, into what was to them foreign and hostile territory, to discourage visits of the local people by acts of aggression and violence, depending on the Mission to protect them from reprisals.

Mr. Webb, who was in charge of the Methodist Mission in the Crocodile Islands, once informed me, when I was at Milingimbi during a brief respite from patrols on the mainland of Arnhem Land, that in the early days of the Mission there he had once, to maintain peace, bought all their fighting spears from the natives, but that when an attack from the mainland was reported to be imminent he had had to re-issue these—though in actual fact the attack did not occur.

As often occurs when a people are brought into contact with those of a different culture, the natives from the east tended to exaggerate traits of the Burara that they regarded as undesirable and often told me ribald stories stressing the misdeeds of their neighbours. After a long recital of the faults of the Burara, whom he stigmatized as *warnba*, one informant remarked by way of special emphasis, '*yappa lukka!*'—they cohabit with their sisters. The brother-sister tabu is rigidly enforced in east Arnhem Land. Even to mention the name of a woman in the presence of her brother is a grave ritual offence, called *mirriri*, and brother-sister incest is a crime for which there is no expiation, punished by the death of both parties.

The charge of incest against the Burara may owe its origin to the fact that these people, unlike their neighbours to the east, had a normal tribal organization, which meant that members of clans of opposite moieties within the tribe and of the appropriate kinship status could marry, since the tribe is not exogamous. Because people between whom marriage was permitted were actually members of the same tribe, the practice would suggest incest to their neighbours of the east, already fearful of the magic of their *kalka* and ready to attribute to these people practices that were to them anti-social and unnatural. This attitude of the Elcho Island people was well shown by the fact that they charged their neighbours with cannibalism and said of them '*nganak lukka*'—they eat flesh (human)—overlooking the fact that they themselves also practised a form of ritual

15:Chaseling M-5 (ca. 1934-1936)1957
OI17 Murngin OI17

177 Aborigines could never be mistaken for liberty, civilization, and Christianity.' Early settlers appropriated everything of value, and when they came into contact with aborigines and their Stone Age beliefs and customs, they could not appreciate their complex social organization and fanatical regard for ancient hunting-grounds and sacred sites. Hence the clashes and feuds of pioneering days.

Aboriginal depopulation was not entirely due to punitive [165] measures and to introduced diseases, for Stone Age man continued to die whenever he came into contact with modern man. In 1820 the British Government granted ten thousand acres at Port Macquarie as an aboriginal reserve; a mission- [197] ary worked there for seventeen years, but by that time the people were extinct and the reserve was abandoned. A realistic missionary of that day wrote: 'Judging from present appearances, by the time the missionary shall have acquired the language so as to preach the Gospel he will have no one to preach to.'

165 197 In less than a century-and-a-half the full-blood aboriginal population of Australia declined to fifty thousand, and the majority of these exist in unwanted or poverty-stricken areas of the continent. All who have had the good fortune to see the unspoiled remnants of this, the oldest of all living races, are puzzled by this decrease in population, and vague suggestions of racial suicide through crude forms of abortion make one ask increasingly: 'Why will they not propagate?' and 'Why do they lose the will to live?' It is a racial tragedy, this diminishing of a people who traversed the hemispheres before the days of the pyramids, this crumbling of a social organization as old as gregarian man, this dissolution of a race too old to be classified with any modern race, but so human that any existing race could have evolved from them.

131 657 However, they are not all dead—yet! In isolated parts of north and north-west Australia nomads roam the bush and rugged mountains of large Reserves. Arnhem Land is the

15:Chaseling M-5 (ca. 1934-1936)1957
OI17 Murngin OI17

Introduction

BY PROFESSOR A. P. ELKIN

FEW people had any interest in north-eastern Arnhem Land, Northern Territory, until 1933. The Aborigines killed five Japanese towards the end of the preceding year, and in 1933, two white prospectors, two beachcombers, and also a member of the police party which had been sent out to arrest the murderers of the Japanese. It seems that in the first place the natives had received some provocation, which justified their subsequent actions, at least in their sight, if not in ours. In addition, they resented the intrusion of yellow and white strangers into their country, who came to satisfy their own interests, not to help the natives.

In some similar situations in other parts of Australia, punitive expeditions have been sent out, resulting in dire consequences for many innocent Aborigines, and the creation of antagonistic attitudes between white and black. Fortunately, wiser plans prevailed; indeed, public opinion, enlightened by the determined views of Missionary and Aborigines' Protection Societies, demanded that they should prevail. It was obvious that some type of buffer should be established in the eastern part of this corner of Arnhem Land, to stand between the native on the one hand, and the occasional intruder on the other hand. The area was an Aboriginal Reserve, but it could not be patrolled in such a way as to preserve its inviolability; it is difficult, out-of-the-way country. Moreover, the best buffer would be one of a permanent nature which would reveal the white man as one desirous of serving the native, not just making use of him or his country.

The Methodist Missionary Society provided this buffer

[pxiv is blank]

15:Chaseling M-5 (ca. 1934-1936)1957
OI17 Murngin OI17

114 by sending a missionary and his wife, who in 1934 selected
• 797 Yirrkala, near Cape Arnhem, as a suitable centre from
[48] which understanding and friendship could radiate out into those parts of the region not influenced by Milingimbi, 150 miles to the west, and the Groote Eylandt Mission, 140 miles to the south.

This missionary was Wilbur Chaseling, the author of this book, readers of which will realize that an excellent choice was made. Mr and Mrs Chaseling did not have time to
[127] take the course in Anthropology in the University of Sydney, for the need to go north was urgent; they could only attend a few times and discuss their work with myself. This book, however, and later talks which I have had with Mr Chaseling show two things: first, that he had the facility to get to know and understand his native people, their culture and manner of life, and second, that he used and applied this knowledge in working out his missionary objectives and methods. Thus, one objective which he set himself was 'to preserve native culture, to encourage the revival of old ceremonies and to preserve in the natives an appreciation of their own social organization'. At the same time, he realized that some customs (such as infanticide and 'warfare') had to be discouraged, while, along with agriculture and medicine, the Christian faith had to be presented in a way that could be understood, and understood, not as a contradiction of, and judgement on, the past, but as its fulfilment.

114 Mr Chaseling's book is a readable and simple introduction to the life and faith of a primitive food-gathering people. It provides a real insight into their minds and everyday happenings. An anthropologist might examine and discuss more theoretically (and boringly) various aspects of the social organization or ritual life, but limited as he is to a couple of visits totalling about twenty-one months, he could not provide that wealth of illustrations and incidents which the observant missionary who spends several years in the

15:Chaseling M-5 (ca. 1934-1936)1957
OI17 Murngin OI17

Age men. Very little was known of Arnhem Land and there was a great deal of guessing. Charts were coastline sketches plotted by Matthew Flinders in the stormy season in 1803, when to overcome the tossing of his small boat, he ordered his sailors to lash him high on the mast with his box of instruments by his side. In the medley of suggestions made for the subjugation of east Arnhem Land the Commonwealth Government accepted the offer of the Methodist Missionary Society to establish a mission station in the area, and it was my good fortune to be accepted to commence the new work.

I had a personal interest in these people, for nomads and their ways had teased my fancy from infancy. Both my mother's and father's families were among the pioneers in the Hawkesbury Valley in New South Wales, where they erected their slab huts and grew their maize. Life was hard for the pioneer, but it was also interesting, with its floods, fires, isolation, and Stone Age men. One died from spear wounds, several had hairbreadth escapes, and stories of their adventures retold among the scenes of the events made a happy background for a growing boy. In one region, a crumbling stone fire-place was all that remained of a stone-and-slab homestead where a fatal attack had been made: on another hillside a partly buried hearthstone showed where a settler's wife had defended herself from an enraged warrior with boiling water from her cooking-pots. As a child, my happiest adventures were in caves blackened by ancient camp-fires and bearing the imprint of aboriginal hands, or amongst rounded sandstone pillars in a totem-centre, or beside flat rocks and caves scored by Stone Age artists.

In May 1934 my wife and I landed in Darwin. Five hundred miles of trackless bush and the Arafura Sea lay between us and the Gulf of Carpentaria, and the only means of transport was a lugger. A lugger sounded very glamorous;

15:Chaseling M-5 (ca. 1934-1936)1957
OI17 Murngin OI17

OOO visitors are a few wandering nomads who barter shells and curios. It seemed a lonely and depressing outpost, but the keepers created their own interests, and one of them showed me his workshop where he cured and stuffed small turtles, working on the shell with emery and plate powder till it took on a brilliant polish of rare beauty.

It was late in the afternoon and we were forty miles east of Cape Don. A well-known missionary from Arnhem Land, the Rev. Theodor Webb of Milingimbi, was with us, and he assured us that the monotony of the low-lying coastline would be broken that night at Sandy Island. It is well named, for it is no more than a pile of sand a few feet above sea level. In their anxiety to go ashore, the Yulengor crew swam rather than wait for the dinghy, and we soon saw the reason for their impatience, as thousands of terns rose screeching from the sand where it was impossible to walk without breaking their eggs. They were about the size of domestic hens' eggs, in pastel shades of blue, green, or biscuit with small blotches of sepia, purple, brown, or grey. A few had hatched, and the fledglings ran blunderingly into the grass and sea. Our crew filled their petrol tins, boxes, and bags, and carried them to their quarters in the fo'c'sle; [262] for as far as the nomad is concerned, fresh or over-ripe tern eggs are equally appetizing, but pride of place is given to those on the point of hatching.

●797 Three days out from Darwin, we dropped anchor at Goulburn Island and landed on the short sandy beach. Tall, heavily laden coconut-palms fringed this beach, and an avenue of wide-spreading mango trees led to a small grove of citrus and frangipani by the old mission house. The buildings were not pretentious, and had been built from corrugated iron and split-cane, with cement floors. Pioneer missionaries landed on the island in 1916 and hacked their way through mangrove jungle and scrub, and erected bark shelters for stores, tools, and medicines; the diarist

15:Chaseling M-5 (ca. 1934-1936)1957
OI17 Murngin OI17

nonchalantly remarked that when bush-rats spoiled most of the stores, they bartered fish, wallaby, and lily-seeds from nomads. 797 ●

We saw white-washed aboriginal cottages built from locally burnt shell-lime, stones and ant-bed that had been standing for twenty years. Weird outlines of hands were in a number of bark huts, and an old nomad explained that when they 'go bush' they leave the mark of a hand in the house of a friend. Imprints are made by chewing moistened clay and spraying it from the mouth over a hand outstretched on the bark. When the hand is removed its outline remains in the centre of the white clay. [201]

Indifferent land had been cultivated, and in good seasons yielded tapioca, sweet-potatoes, coconuts, and bananas. [241] Nomads work in the gardens during the wet season and also collect bêche-de-mer from the mud-flats for export. Women weave baskets, fans, and trays from wild pandanus palm, and these are marketed for them by the mission. [226] [439] [285]

At Goulburn Island I met some of the young Fijians who work on all these stations. Kolinio was a giant, a carpenter by trade and the son of a chief. He introduced me to the satisfying juice of the green coconut by gashing a lip in the soft shell of a green nut and handing it to me brimming with cold, exquisitely flavoured liquid. It has been inadequately likened to cold lemonade. Fijians get on well with aborigines and perhaps their colour is a link rather than a bar. They are born agriculturists, but need to unlearn a lot when they come from their fertile islands to desolate monsoonal Arnhem Land. [177]

Milingimbi was at that time the end of the lugger trip. It is one of the many low scrub-covered islands and mud-flats known as the Crocodile Islands, yet within thirty miles of Milingimbi there is the densest Yulengor population in Arnhem Land. In 1918 this mission was begun as an extension of that at Goulburn Island. The advance seems [161]

15:Chaseling M-5 (ca. 1934-1936)1957
O117 Murngin O117

797 small enough; but at that time it was a big undertaking, for the only transport was by sailing-lugger, the coastline was low, unhealthy, and mosquito-ridden, and the Yulengor had a bad reputation. Progress was painfully slow, but today the mission has its houses, workshops, sawmill, church, and aboriginal cottages built from locally-milled cypress pine. Emphasis has been laid on agriculture, and in favourable seasons large quantities of tapioca and sweet-potatoes are harvested.

[136] Milingimbi will always be remembered for its sand-flies, and they made a permanent impression on the R.A.A.F. stationed there during the war. Fine cheese-cloth nets will keep them out, but the refugee then swelters in the heat, and painful experience drives one to defeat the pest with an ordinary mosquito net and dense clouds of smoke from cypress-pine sawdust. Sisters from the mission carry buckets of this smoking sawdust to church and worship in an enveloping smoke-haze. Mosquitoes occasionally make it impossible for Yulengor to work in the gardens, and missionaries were driven from their workshops till they resorted to the pungent sawdust smoke-bucket. Each goat-herd had its own smoke-fire at night and another was lit under the fowl roost, otherwise the hens complained all night and refused to lay.

In charge at Milingimbi was Theodor Webb, a staunch and practical Christian. He was now turning his hand to one of the many jobs that fall to a missionary, the rescuing of horses bogged in a waterhole. He had been a blacksmith before entering the Church, and when he came to Arnhem Land he found plenty of scope for his muscular gifts in clearing land, and in fencing and ploughing on this isolated settlement. He was making it possible for Stone Age men to settle on the island, where he taught them to cultivate the soil, produce most of their simple requirements, and make contact with Christian ideals and modern civilization. He

15:Chaseling M-5 (ca. 1934-1936)1957
OI17 Murngin OI17

invited me to go with him for the horses, but warned me to keep my eyes open for green tree-ants. I looked in vain for the ants till Webb pointed to a ball of leaves on the tree near my head. These were green tree-ants at close quarters.

Nests of the green tree-ant are as big as a man's head and are made from leaves bound with larvae-silk. Larvae spin the silk to cover themselves, but workers divert the silk for nest-making, drawing the leaves together and weaving the living larvae-shuttle backwards and forwards till the foliage is bound with silken thread. Webb held his finger near the nest, and the warrior ants attacked; they all seemed to be soldiers, for they climbed on top of each other and fired formic acid. Months later I saw Yulengor using this acid for coughs and colds, first crushing the ants, soaking them in water and sipping the mixture.

We found the horses bogged in the swamp. Webb said they became bogged when rolling in the mud to coat themselves for protection against mosquitoes. I suspected a local mosquito 'yarn', but on the way home saw a dozen brumbies coming from the mud-flats, and all completely mosquito-proofed for the night.

15:Chaseling M-5 (ca. 1934-1936)1957
O117 Murngin O117

177 262 appreciate it, particularly during their New Year festivals, but nomads will not eat the product, and their half-starved dingoes turn from it.

648 At Caledon Bay we walked over the scene of the then recent Japanese massacre. In 1933 the Asiatics came to fish for bêche-de-mer, and nomads told me that they landed near the aboriginal camp and went from one family to another offering handfuls of tobacco in return for women. Tobacco makes an almost irresistible appeal to nomads, but they surlily refused to trade, though the tobacco so tantalizingly near made them moody and irritable. Trouble was still brewing some days later, when the Japanese established their camp and employed nomads to collect firewood for the trepang fires. It is said that an Asiatic threw a piece of damper at a Yulengor for refusing to work, and thereby brought the trouble to a head; for even if they are desperately poor, nomads are extremely sensitive to a slight. Their spears were hidden in the sand, and they speared the Japanese so that only one escaped by diving into the sea and swimming to a nearby headland. Spears punctured the surface as he swam underwater, but he out-witted his pursuers by ingeniously breaking the head off a spear and clasping it under his arm as he fled into the bush. His ruse worked, and pursuing Yulengor said: 'Leave him, he has the spear through him and will soon be dead.' Days later, he arrived at Milingimbi, two hundred miles away, lacerated, exhausted and naked, and missionaries later took him to Darwin. He took the first boat to Japan.

797 [133] No suitable site for a station could be found in Caledon Bay, so we returned to Yirrkala near Cape Arnhem. It had an exposed anchorage and poor soil, but it also had fresh water, an elevated building-site and clean beaches. We decided to establish the station there.

By the middle of November, timber had been cut and

15:Chaseling M-5 (ca. 1934-1936)1957
OI17 Murngin OI17

brought from Milingimbi, and the first corrugated-iron shed was erected. It was fifty feet long, and designed to hold stores and trade goods, as well as flour for the nomads in payment for their work in clearing and cultivating virgin bushland. My wife and I lived in one end of it for two years. With the help of Yulengor I had yarded brumbies, and broken some of them for Yirrkala; and with calves, goats, pigs, and poultry, these were shipped by lugger to the new settlement. My wife and the rest of the goods came on this second trip, and an uncomfortable voyage it was, for the sea was rough and the boat had to be beached twice for repairs. One forced landing was made on Elcho Island, and the party, having fought mosquitoes for hours, was dozing off to sleep on the beach when a Yulengor woman in the party crept over to my wife and sepulchrally whispered: 'This where two feller bin killem.'

15:Chaseling M-5 (ca. 1934-1936)1957
O117 Murngin O117

CHAPTER THREE

Early Days and Strange Contacts

797 177 MANY small hordes came to Yirrkala within a few weeks of our arrival and set up their camps on the beach. I found I had a lot to learn from them before presuming to teach. Curiosity had lured them to the station where this white family had come with the unheard-of intention of living permanently in their country and growing food where food had never been found. Some of them had not met a white man, and seeing a white woman was a new experience for most of them.

Their habits, customs and beliefs were separated from ours by a thousand generations, and they could not understand our equipment and tools; agricultural implements, fencing wire, carpenter's and blacksmith's tools were of no greater significance to them than our small wireless set for receiving and transmitting messages to our nearest neighbours one hundred and fifty miles away. They understood that this wireless enabled us to communicate with the outside world, and as a test case Marupla asked me to 'wireless' and tell his friends to come in from Caledon Bay! A few days later there was rumour of a killing in a distant horde, and when I asked how the news had come, one man nonchalantly remarked: 'Oh, might be wireless.'

[757] Medicines were readily accepted, the most popular being a cough mixture with a liquorice and golden syrup base, which was always in demand for cuts and bruises! Patented tablets made their usual appeal, and doubtless influenced most aches and pains, at least by suggestion.

797 464 We offered the Yulengor employment in clearing the

15:Chaseling M-5 (ca. 1934-1936)1957
OI17 Murngin OI17

ground and cultivating and planting crops. Payment in the form of flour and tobacco was made for all work done, and the principle of 'no work—no pay' was strictly adhered to. Agriculture was an economic necessity in assisting them to develop from a nomadic existence to a communal life. Pay was later in the form of food grown on the station; in this way they became self-supporting, and profits were automatically returned to them.

When the time came for planting it seemed ridiculous to the nomad to bury good sweet-potatoes instead of eating them, for the relationship between seed and harvest had not occurred to them. About three months later, when the first crops were still immature I was surprised one morning to find that they had been scratched out and eaten. Two months of hard clearing and three months of cultivating had gone overnight. Disappointing as it was, the people could hardly be blamed, for it was against all their experience to leave good food to mature. For centuries, stray coconuts had drifted from the East Indies to the shores of Arnhem Land, but none took root, for this unexpected harvest from the sea was eagerly seized and eaten. Nomads consume all edible food at hand, and in bush life rarely wait for yams, fruit, and berries to ripen. Food is scarce, and they instinctively make the most of anything they find. I have seen them bring loads of popular cashew nuts into camp, stripping the trees and smashing their wide shady branches in an effort to get the last of the crop, and then gorge the nuts through day and night till all have been eaten. On rare occasions a number of turtle are caught, and though some could be kept alive and eaten later, they are killed at once, and the camp feasts and sleeps intermittently till the catch is finished.

We tried to explain that cows and goats were kept for their milk and not for meat, but nomads found it hard to sit and tend them day by day and yard them at night, when each

15;Chaseling M-5 (ca. 1934-1936)1957
OI17 Murngin OI17

beast represented a potential feast. Tailing stock, and protecting them from dingoes whilst they grazed, was a foreign idea to Stone Age hunters, and if they were not watched, they would build each day a rough brushwood yard in the bush to prevent the stock wandering off for grass and water. Meanwhile the herdsman slept in the shade, and at sundown he brought the animals back to the station yards.

With two hundred nomads on the station, a simple system of sanitation was soon necessary. In the bush they never bother about this, for they live in small hordes, and camp in one place only long enough to eat the meagre food supply, and then move elsewhere. I have never seen Yulengor deliberately wash themselves, but they are so often in the water after fish or crossing creeks and swamps, that they do sometimes get wet. Their cleansing agents are sand and ashes in which they sleep and lounge, and these are fairly effective in removing body moisture and dirt. The predominating acrid odour in their hair, dillybags, and shelters comes mostly from the blinding smoke in which they cook, eat, and sleep.

Unfortunately most nomads take too readily to wearing left-off clothes. We did all we could to control the craze, and issued free soap and a yard of brightly coloured cloth to the men, and short skirts to the women. Our chief objection to the use of clothing is that it is passed from one to another, never washed, and when wet is allowed to dry on the body, thereby causing colds and pneumonia. Bush Yulengor wear nothing unless it be an occasional piece of bark or bunch of leaves attached to a waist-string. But when traders and adventurers introduced coloured cloth, blankets, and left-off clothing, they were eagerly acquired as ornaments, passed from one to another, worn till they fell to pieces, and except for accidental immersion, were never washed. Strange clothes have been seen, as when a man was seen in camp dressed in lady's floral Japanese pyjamas

15:Cbaseling M-5 (ca. 1934-1936)1957
OI17 Murngin OI17

bartered from a passing lugger. In church, the situation got out of control when a bearded nomad came in dressed only in a lady's pair of waist-to-knee pink drawers acquired in Darwin and bartered for over five hundred miles.

With refreshing independence older Yulengor remained aloof from the fashion of wearing clothes. Daughters of Wonggu, the husband of twenty-odd wives and father of many children, advised him to don a covering, but he naïvely remarked: 'Why should I wear clothes? There's nothing wrong with me; I have nothing to hide.' He walks about as Nature made him, except for two strands of bush string tied round his waist. When I asked him why he wore the string, he told me it was for chronic back-ache.

It seemed only reasonable at Yirrkala to preserve Yulengor culture, to encourage the revival of old ceremonies, and to stimulate in the people an appreciation of their own social organization which often has suffered from alien contact. It is unjust for any alien to come amongst primitive people for the purpose of upsetting their mode of life and converting them to living and thinking as he does; and there is no one so pathetic as a detribalized aboriginal. He is adrift from his own society and cannot fully enter into the alien social life he apes. However, it is not to be expected that all the Yulengor customs are harmless and worthy of a place in their social life; some practices lend themselves to development, but others, such as infanticide, have nothing to be said in their favour. The birth of twins is rare, but if it occurs, the mother or a relative kills one at birth or soon afterwards. We were told that one of twins in a Yirrkala camp was to be killed, and upon inquiry learned that superstition was the driving force behind the custom. It is true that in the bush a mother can scarcely feed herself and one child, and that if she has two infants then at least three lives are endangered; so it seems probable that infanticide was introduced in past ages because of economic necessity. But as time went on,

15:Chaseling M-5 (ca. 1934-1936)1957
O117 Murngin O117

the birth of twins came to be regarded as an ill-omen to be removed only by killing one of them. The establishment of a station, with its agriculture and food resources, removed the original cause of infanticide, and it became more than justifiable to discourage the practice.

Polygamy also can never be met by alien dictate, though unfortunately it is a persistent 'red herring', and some reformers have attempted to establish monogamy within a few years. In one instance, old much-married men each brought one wife to the station and then established bush camps about half a mile away in the scrub for their other wives and children. I never deliberately suggested monogamy to Yulengor; but of course they realized that I had one wife whilst some of them had three, eight, a dozen, or even more, and they talked about the poverty of my house and discussed with me the practices of a Christian community. Apparently the matter ended there; but after four or five years amongst them, I wondered if a change was not coming too suddenly when several of the younger men told me that they intended having only one wife each. This revolutionary change can be effected, when they are ready for it and want it, without serious disruption, for men may pass over their 'promised' wives to young, unmarried brothers who stand in the same tribal relationship of 'husband' to the women.

Again, aborigines are reputed to be pilferers; but their outlook is so totally different from ours that they cannot be judged by our codes. In their world of nomadism they innocently pick up and use whatever takes their fancy; everything edible is there for eating, and they roam at will with all their possessions in their hands. If a nomad finds another man's canoe in a bay or creek, he feels quite at liberty to make full use of it, paddling it away for perhaps twenty miles before leaving it for the owner to recover. Into this ancient world of the nomad came the foreign

15:Chaseling M-5 (ca. 1934-1936)1957
O117 Murngin O117

trepanger, trader, scientist, and missionary with peculiar and unheard of ideas, and with theories of personal possessions, which they decline to share, although living in an aboriginal community based on reciprocal sharing and exchanging, in which all are relations.

These two systems have been clashing for one hundred and seventy years, and while some pioneers and traders have resorted to force and compulsion, others have reasoned and explained their attitude to property and the necessity for respecting personal possessions. But whatever methods have been adopted to instil in the aboriginal a new regard for private property, he retains his ancient, instinctive, and characteristic attitude of innocently using whatever takes his fancy. A missionary once told me he had shut a youth in a tool shed for continued pilfering, but that each night he climbed out through the gable, spent the night in camp with his friends, and was back in detention next morning, ready for breakfast and official release. On another station the missionary pointed to a roomy wooden hut under a shady tamarind tree, and said that it had been put there as a warning to deter pilfering from the gardens. Eventually, with due ceremony, a Yulengor was locked up, but he burrowed his way out through the sandy floor and made nocturnal visits to his friends. By morning he was back in place with the hole filled in, and ready for food, tobacco, and a sleep during the day. In the following wet season he claimed the building for himself and family and proceeded to camp in it.

Trepangers made seasonal visits to Arnhem Land, and property rights were argued with spears and rifles. At the first hint of trouble these fishermen sailed away, and their obvious precautions were not lost on nomads, who realized that they were feared and developed lugger-raiding propensities.

Apart from the desirability of exercising some control over warlike hordes, a simple code of law and order was necessary

15:Chaseling M-5 (ca. 1934-1936)1957
O117 Murngin O117

797 on the new settlement, where ordinary and ancient nomadic law did not provide for the needs in a new and developing communal life. Nevertheless, I determined not to attempt to enforce it by approaching the Yulengor in the dual role of policeman-missionary, with a gun in one hand and a Bible in the other. The broad instructions given me were: 'Work along from day to day and do the best you can', and having thus more or less a free hand, I decided to try a thorough-going pacifism, though I must admit that I was doubtful if it would make any impression under these adverse conditions. Physical force was not used in any way as a means of control, although in several instances youths may possibly have deserved something of the sort for deliberate destructiveness. Taking a long chance, I declared the station neutral ground, and though fighting and quarrelling were not directly forbidden, those who wanted to fight were told to 'fight it out' on an old camping-ground twenty miles away. Such unheard of neutrality was altogether quixotic to notoriously warlike hordes, and maybe they were nonplussed by the novelty of it and came into the way of accepting it.

[926]
[181]

15:Chaseling M-5 (ca. 1934-1936)1957
O117 Murngin O117

YULENGOR

484 I was awakened by the trilling of a butcher bird, and as the sun tipped the motionless trees we resumed our journey through dew-laden grass. No food had been saved from the night before and sharp eyes were on the look-out for something to eat, but it was not till about ten o'clock that the women cooeed and a halt was made to cook an opossum and two goannas.

The day was uneventful and at sundown we came to a deep crocodile-infested creek about a quarter of a mile wide. As there were no canoes about, I wondered how the crossing [481] was to be made, but without hesitation several youths waded in and swam over with their spears. This is the way all the men would have crossed, but Jirring suggested that he and I wait with my medical equipment and camera till his wives and children arrived with their food and family possessions. [501] They were prepared for the crossing, and had sheets of paper-bark which they stacked in heaps on the water, driving digging-sticks through each stack to hold them together. Small children and bundles of food were then piled on top, older children clung to the sides, and a woman swam beside each pile as she pushed it to the other side. Medicines, camera, and swag were successfully shipped in the same way. Such crossings, with yelping dogs, shrilling women, and squealing children, apparently scare away hungry crocodiles, for they seldom attack, although on this occasion several glided off the mud into the stream as we approached. At dusk we came to the camp of a Blue Mud Bay horde, some distance from the river.

[092] [164] I spent several days in this camp with Yulengor I had not seen before, and was able to treat wounds and ulcers and give hypodermic injections for yaws and gangosa. By day 484 the men stayed under leafy bough shelters, talking, sleeping, 512 and preparing totemic emblems with intricate and artistic 462 designs. Women went food-gathering, and at sundown arrived with loads of firewood and dilly-bags bulging with

15:Chaseling M-5 (ca. 1934-1936)1957
O117 Murngin O117

power behind totem centres, and human spirits created and received again in Buralkor by him after death.

It soon becomes obvious that to arrive at an understanding of the nomad, and to win his complete confidence, there must be an appreciation of his religion. His religion runs down through his secret life to everyday arts and crafts, which were all given him by the Junkgowa and determines even his methods of food-gathering and cooking. All these things are done in a particular manner, because the Junkgowa so instituted them. In the network of the nomad's life the simplest of activities are linked to his highest beliefs and noblest aspirations. They stand or fall together, and no part of his habits and customs can be tampered with without the risk of doing violence to the entire structure of his life and culture. An effective approach to the nomad can be made only on the basis of religion; that is, by an appreciation of his habits, outlook, and philosophy of life. Be a man trader, adventurer, or missionary, he will find a ready welcome if he is prepared to respect their laws, both common and sacred, which are all interwoven and rest on ancient Junkgowa creation myths.

Several old men were talking together and invited me to join them. One of them said: 'We like those stories of Jesus that you tell us: He is the white man's Junkgowa. Our Junkgowa came from Wangarr and we can see now that, in the same way, Jesus is the white man's Junkgowa.' It was instantly clear that they accepted Jesus as the equal of their Junkgowa—and no more. If such an estimate were accepted it would preclude any development in their outlook, aspiration, and custom. I suggested to these primitive philosophers that many Junkgowa had taught the white man, although they went by the name of 'prophets'. Second, their teachings were incomplete and vague till God the Eternal Spirit, known to aborigines as Wangarr, sent His Son Jesus to complete the revelation. Because of the

15:Chaseling M-5 (ca. 1934-1936)1957
O117 Murngin O117

teachings of Jesus, much prophetic teaching was superseded; and the Christian Church, or tribe, nominally follows only the way of Jesus.

A parallel was then applied to aboriginal Junkgowa, for the old men agreed that some of their ancient habits based on the Junkgowa were not all that they could be; their acceptance of feuds, tribal-killings, and infanticide. All that is good in aboriginal law (and much of it is good and noble as far as it goes) can thus be completed by Jesus, who came from Wangarr, not only to teach white men, but aborigines as well.

An obvious weakness in this approach is the nomad's indefinite conception of Wangarr, but there is also great value in the term, in that it is familiar and scarcely less vague to the aboriginal mind than the primitive Hebrew conception of the 'Eternal', as found in the early pages of the Bible. Similarly, Wangarr can be filled with Jesus' conception of 'God the Father' without doing damage to aboriginal culture. No cleavage becomes apparent, except that killings, due to ignorance and superstition, are disappearing, and new life and vigour are infusing their ancient but stagnant nature-religion. A new racial vigour arising from applied Christianity, and including all that is best in modern civilization, is affecting nomadic economic life, so that the change from nomads to agriculturists has already begun, a simple monetary system has been introduced to replace barter, the standard of life and living conditions are improving as nomads apply their knowledge of arts and crafts to new remunerative industries, and regular education in the schools is profoundly and advantageously affecting a strictly aboriginal culture in the rising generation.

One of the Yulengor toiling with me on the rocky Yirrkala headland voiced the question in every mind: 'Bapa, why are we digging this hole?'

'So as to erect a maraian' (sacred totem) 'in it.'

15:Chaseling M-5 (ca. 1934-1936)1957
O117 Murngin O117

177 Incredulously the men paused from their digging:
197 'Maraian? But if we put it here on the headland, the women and children will see it.'

'Yes. This is the Jesus-Totem; it is the biggest Totem of all. Everyone can look at it because Jesus is the Saviour or "Ancestor" of women and children as well as of men. When we look at it we think of Him; we call it His Cross.'

Wondering greatly they returned to their work. For five years these men had heard the Christian gospel of peace and good-will, and to some extent had grasped its sublime bearing on their ageless feuds, tribal-killings, and fears. It was now felt that the use of this symbol would bring implications of the Gospel more realistically to their minds. So a tall swamp-tree was hand-squared into a Cross about forty feet high, dragged through the jungle and raised on the Yirrkala headland. Towering over native camps and all the mission, it is visible for several miles; all who make their way to Yirrkala by bush-track or canoe realize that they are coming to the 'Cross-wanga' or Cross-camp. With a visible Cross on the headland it was easier to talk about it to a people whose minds were steeped in symbolism, who live in the past, and whose history, beliefs, and myths are linked to visible totem centres.

A young American airman pursued attacking bombers far out over the Arafua Sea, till lack of petrol forced him to turn back. When some miles off-shore, his petrol gave out, and he was forced to parachute into the sea. He was washed ashore unconscious on Bremer Island. In the early morning the airman was literally stabbed into consciousness, and found two naked nomads standing over him with a spear held determinedly to his ribs.

'You Jap?' they asked in broken English.

'My God!' gasped the airman, 'no, I'm American.'

He said later that the nomads 'jabbered' together, undecided what to do, for neither of them had heard of

15:Chaseling M-5 (ca. 1934-1936)1957
O117 Muragin O117

Americans nor understood his accent. Their looks were menacing, till one Yulengor saw a miniature Cross round the airman's neck; whereupon, with unmistakable friendliness, he dropped his spear, and pointing to the Cross said: 'Jesus! This number-one man.' That was enough for them; the pilot was helped to his feet, given water and food and made to realize that he was among friends.

From Bremer Island it is twelve miles by sea to Yirrkala, but the trip is a slow one by canoe, so the Yulengor crossed to the mainland and guided and sometimes carried the airman through the bush to the mission. From the top of the highest hill on the track they tried to point out the mission station, but all he could see on the rugged headland, towering above what otherwise might have been inhospitable jungle, was a broad white Cross.